HISTORY OF ODESSA

To commemorate the

50th ANNIVERSARY

of the advent of

Odessa's First Settlers

and the

40th ANNIVERSARY

of the founding of

Holy Family Parish
ODESSA, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

1901 – 1954

by

Rev. Frank Gerein, D.D.

Premier's Message

I am grateful for this opportunity to join with the people of Odessa community in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first settlers in this part of Saskatchewan, and the establishment of a Catholic parish by these pioneers some ten years later.

It is a happy conjunction of events that this 50th anniversary of the first settlement of the Odessa district coincides so closely with that of the Golden Jubilee of the Province itself. I am sure that observance of your local anniversary will give an added significance to the province-wide Golden Jubilee which will be celebrated in a variety of ways next year.

We are all too prone to forget the courage and the initiative of the pioneers who settled this great province in the early days. They faced problems which tried them to the limit, but they never faltered in their duty to their families and their country. Today, we owe much to their courage, their resourcefulness, their vision and their faith. The least we can do is to remember them, to learn all we can about the difficulties they faced and surmounted, and keep their memories alive in our own minds and those of our children.

May I wish you every success in your program of commemoration, and congratulate you upon completion of your fine new church building.

T. C. Douglas

#34166 $75-

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Regina -:- Sask.

Most Reverend M. C. O'NEILL, D.D., O.B.E., M.M.
Archbishop of Regina

February 18, 1954.

Rev. F. Gerein, D.D.,
Odessa, Sask.

Dear Father Gerein:

I am indeed most happy to offer these few words of congratulations to you and your parishioners on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the community of Odessa and the fortieth anniversary of Holy Family Parish.

For those who read this well documented and model parish history I would say "The record speaks for itself." It is a story of pioneers of intrepid faith and courage, of men and women who were convinced that "unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it." From the beginning their first concern was to have a place where God could dwell in their midst. I know that today's magnificent church is their dream come true.

But not only did this Parish serve its God; it also served its country. Convinced of the need of educational facilities it made the necessary sacrifice to provide these. The graduates of your schools, the young men and women who served in the armed forces are surely the best witnesses to this.

May the Holy Family continue to exercise their benevolent watchfulness over the Pastor and the parishioners of Odessa.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

† M. C. O'NEILL

Archbishop of Regina.

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Forward

In grateful commemoration of the heroic efforts of our ancestors, 50 and more years ago, to establish new homes in the inhospitable wilderness of Western Canada, and to recall the sacrifices and vicissitudes, the sweat and the tears, with which the Holy Family Parish at Odessa was founded and developed during the past 40 years a new parish church has been built and this historical sketch has been written — both to serve as memorials to Odessa's Founders and Pioneers.

That their names and their contribution to the evolution of this community might not fall into oblivion, such a historical survey could no longer be deferred. But such an undertaking entailed serious difficulties. The Parish Registers begin only with the year 1912. Aside from these, no documents, records or other historical sources are available.

This historical sketch is therefore the result of many years of investigation and evaluation of secondary sources, and of consultation with as many Old-timers as may still be contacted. While some these sources produced conflicting information, every possible effort has been exerted to verify and obtain authentic facts.

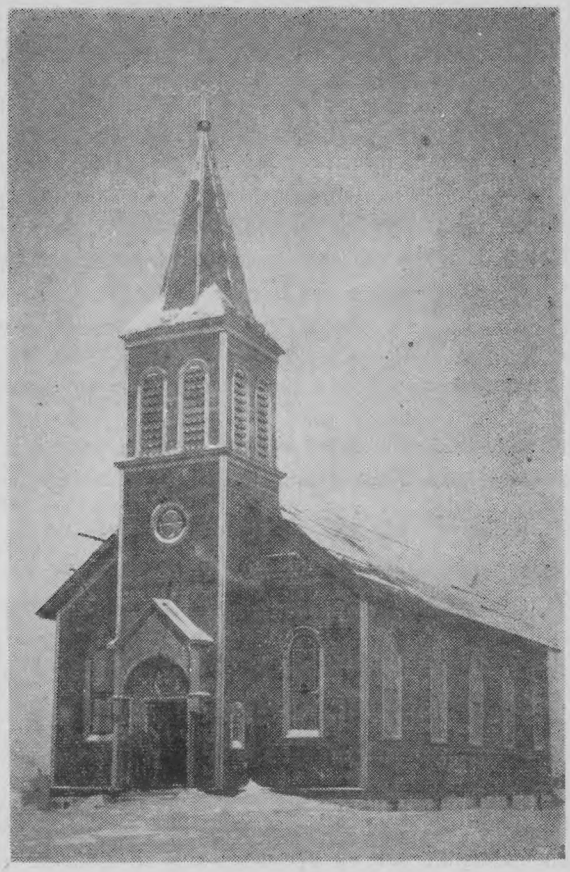
Special thanks for their assistance is hereby offered to the Right Rev. A. J. Janssen, P. A. and Rev. P. Schorr, V. F., as well as to Messrs. John Eisler, John Schatz (†), Ignatz Kraft (†), Lukas Vogt, R. F. Deutscher, K. A. Righetti, Conrad Wild, Frank Muhr, Thomas Runge, John Klein, Sr., Matt. Zacher, and John Roth, for their kind and invaluable help in gathering the information herein presented, and for the pictures and illustrations which supplement the text.

We do, however, sincerely apologize, in advance, for any errors which may none the less occur in this History of Odessa.

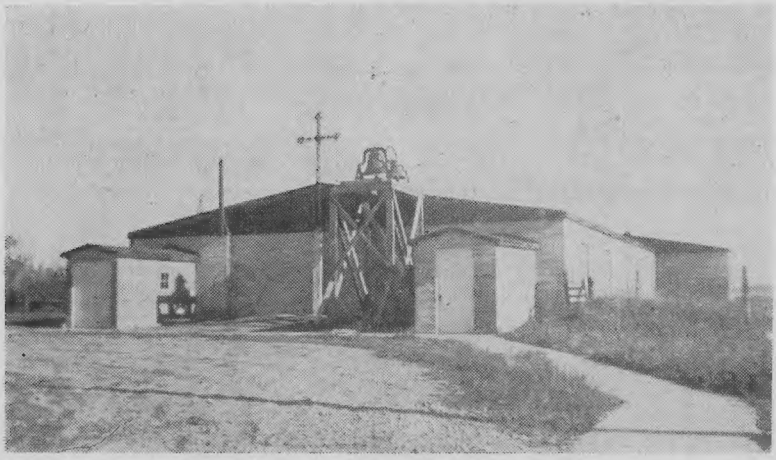
Finally, we express our appreciation to our advertisers whose good wishes and support made the publication of this monograph possible.

Feb. 2, 1954.

Rev. Frank Gerein.



FIRST ODESSA CHURCH
(1908—1926)



ODESSA'S BASEMENT CHURCH
(1926—1953)

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

ODESSA — a name of some importance even in early Christian history. It is the name of the major city on the southern edge of the Russian steppes, a grain-exporting seaport on the northern shores of the Black Sea. Never a large city, Odessa was the thriving metropolis through which a large number of rural grain-growing communities, isolated on the steppes, and generally without railroads, ranging from 10 to 50 versts or miles from the city, communicated with the world and found a market for their produce.

These rural communities, settled mostly by people of German extraction from Alsace-Lorraine about the end of the XVII Century, were either exclusively Roman Catholic or Lutheran by religion. At the beginning of the XX Century, some of these colonies contained as many as 1000 to 5000 souls.

The Czarist government was never really sympathetic towards these people. Their rural isolation, small land-holdings, primitive methods of cultivation, long distance from their colony-residence to the land they tilled on the outlying fringes of the colony and even longer distance from a ready market — these conditions offered few opportunities for progress and stifled ambition and initiative in their young people.

Small wonder then that the more progressive among these people cast about for new homes in more hospitable lands. Little wonder also that when a flood of these people migrated to the United States or to Canada, the memory of the friends and relatives in the mild and friendly climate of the Black Sea lingered long, and that they gave the names associated with the land of their birth to the towns and schools and institutions in their new American homes. Thus, we find such names as Speier, Blumenfeld, Blumenthal, Friedenthal, Selz, Josefsthal, Strassburg, Marienthal, Elsas, etc., wherever these people established themselves. Thus too, the city of Odessa was commemorated, for we find villages or towns bearing this name in Ontario, in Texas, in Montana, and in several other regions of America. And so ODESSA, in Saskatchewan, recalls the fact that a large proportion of its pioneering settlers hailed from the environing colonies of Odessa in South Russia.

In the vast Austria-Hungary of Emperor Francis Joseph at the beginning of the present century, there were also regions such as Bukowina, Burgenland, Galicia, Croatia, etc., where few opportunities were afforded to the initiative and ambition of Catholic youth of German extraction. To these people, as to their Russian-German fellow Catholics, their Catholic Faith was a precious heritage. From these regions also a movement of migration to Canada began at the turn of the century.

For Canada, and for their Catholic Faith, it was fortunate that these peoples were gregarious and even patriarchal in the sense that the father of a family invariably sought to provide land and a home for his children close to his own. Hence thriving communities evolved throughout Western Canada wherein a common Faith and a common Germanic language, even if dialects differed, laid the foundation of flourishing and progressive oases on a bald and boundless prairie, where biting, wind-driven, snows in winter, intense heats and searing winds in summer, and all too often terrifying prairie fires in Autumn, contrasted so sharply with the placid climate of their various European native lands.

Their common Faith and language, a common hope for better days, a mutual support to bear and share the common rigours of poverty and hardship --- these became the bases on which the future of Odessa, and of so many similar communities in Western Canada, was founded by the intrepid pioneers and forebears of our western parishes. In such a mould was formed and fashioned the parish of the Holy Family at Odessa, in Sakatchewan.

Other Names

These early colonists did not immediately or spontaneously adopt the name of Odessa. The first school was called Sibel Plains and this name seems to have been commonly accepted until the Canadian Northern Railway was constructed in 1907 and a local Post Office was assigned the name of MAGNA. For a time and in some circles, this district was also called Moser Valley before it received the name of Magna. In 1911, when the village was finally incorporated, the present and permanent name of ODESSA was given to the community.

Primitive Conditions

Odessa thus comprises a district which extends some 12 miles north and s o u t h and about 5 miles east and west. It was literally created out of nothing for almost without exception, the first settlers were practically penniless and they built their homes out of sod which they spaded or plowed from the surface of the prairie. They had few horses, and many broke their land with the power provided by indolent oxen and walked their furrows behind hand plows.

To earn a little cash money, they cut and hauled hay to Indian Head, Qu'Appelle, and even to Regina — in every instance a long and tedious journey taking from one to three days. For fuel they journeyed many miles to the bush to cut a load of green poplar poles -- and this too requires herculean work and hardship to haul over snows-wept and highly drifted snowbanks, sometimes upsetting and forcing them to reload their sleighs, freezing hands, feet and faces. Some of the younger men hired out to farmers who had settled earlier near the Main Line of the C.P.R. at wages of about 75 cents a day.

The heat of summer, the plagues of mosquitoes, hail and wind in summer, lack of roads or even paths, distances between the settlers' hovels and still greater distance over trackless plains to the town of Indian Head, Qu'Appelle or Wolseley — these were additional o b s t a c l e s which only the stout - hearted of heroic mould could surmount. Under such conditions it seems incredible that these early colonists could establish themselves and d e v e l o p the flourishing community which now surrounds Odessa, and many similar western villages.

Other Difficulties

Nor were physical and material hardship their only problem. Few of those venturesome settlers had more than a very rudimentary education and none knew the language, customs or laws which could have ameliorated their condition and facilitated their business relations. Deprived too of the consolations and direction of their priests for these were very few in the western wilderness, it is amazing how tenaciously they clung to their primitive prairie farms and how tenderly they cherished their religious traditions.

Almost universal among them were the precious virtues of frugality and thrift, industry and initiative, piety and Faith. These sustained them amid incredible trials and hardships; these inspired them to mutual and unselfish, often heroic, sacrifice, whereby a neighbor was far more than a friend, and the needs of one were the concern of all.

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CHAPTER II

ODESSA'S FIRST SETTLERS

The Odessa district is now more than 50 years old, the first settlers having arrived here in 1901. In the three following years more than 50 families established themselves upon the Odessa plains which, at that time, stretched as far as the eye could see, and which were broken only by the scrubby, almost worthless, willow bluffs which thrived around the numerous shallow sloughs on the plains.

Almost all of those early settlers have passed away, most of them in death, but a few also by moving to other communities or to other parts of Canada or the United States. But the nucleus of the district remained, and their sons carried on when their fathers disappeared, so that the bulk of today's population in the Odessa district traces its origins to those original heralds of civilization and progress.

Vibank and Blumenfeld

Although the first settlers arrived in this district in 1901, it was the large influx of 1903 and 1904 which really laid the permanent foundation of a Catholic community at Odessa. A considerable number of settlers had established themselves in the vicinity of Vibank before 1901. A notable group also had settled from 8 to 12 miles south and west of Odessa, where they formed a small Catholic mission under the name of Blumenfeld.

Owing to its proximity to both Vibank, Sedley and Odessa, this was abandoned in 1916, and the families pertaining to Blumenfeld were assigned to these three parishes. Hence, in this record, the families which then belonged to Blumenfeld and were later attached to Odessa, will be recorded in this sketch.

1901

The year 1901 witnessed the arrival of four families, with a total of 24 souls, in this district. They were:

1. Friedrich Deutscher, 58, with 11 children;
2. Peter Gelger, 40, with 3 children;
3. Stephan Tosczak, 58, with 10 children;
4. John Wrobel, 40, unmarried.

1902

The following year brought the following additional arrivals, thus adding another 25 persons to the nascent community:

1. Ben Herman, 36, single;
2. Joseph Herman, 60, with 4 children;
3. John Klein, Sr., 60, with 5 children;
4. Lorenz Klein, 22, single;
5. Frank Kronberger, 58, with 3 children;
6. Joseph Ziegler, 34, with 3 children.

1903

The year 1903 brought a notable number of immigrants. From early spring till late fall, hardly a week passed without some newcomer seeking a homestead and starting to erect a sod house for his family. The following list contains the names of most of these new arrivals, together with their approximate age, as far as they can now be determined:

1. Frank Baumgartner, 23, with 2 children;
2. Nickolaus Baumgartner, 34, without children;
3. Anton Bleischwitz, 40, with 4 children;
4. Adam Hasenfratz, 27, with one child;
5. Peter Herman, 29, without children;
6. Melchior Hoffart 60, with 2 children;
7. John Klein, Jr., 25, without children;
8. Nickolaus Mayer, 45, with 6 children;
9. George Moser, 50, with 6 children;
10. Ignatz Moser, 25, with one child;
11. Felix Neigel, single;
12. John Neigel, single;
13. Engelbert Reiss, 34, with 5 children;
14. Frank Rissling, 25, with 2 children;
15. John Roth, 59, with 9 children;
16. George Runge, 38, with 4 children;
17. Joseph Sali, 28, with 3 children;
18. Frank Sax, 37, with 2 children;
19. John Schatz, 34, with 3 chidren;
20. Joseph Schaefer, 46, with 3 children;
21. Lukas Vogt, 55, with 6 children;
22. Sebastian Weichel, 40, with 5 children;
23. John Wiest, 27, with one child;
24. John Wiome, 27, with 2 children;
25. Conrad Wild, 27, without children;
26. John Wild, 32, with 2 children;
27. Joseph Wild, 48, with 9 children;
28. Matthias Zacher, 46, with 5 children;
29. Pius Zacher, 37, with 2 children;

1904

This stream of immigrants continued throughout 1904 and brought the following additonal settlers and perhaps a few more whom we have been unable to discover:

1. George Feser, 35, with 2 children;
2. Joseph Frasz, 26, with one child;
3. Conrad Herbach, 50, with 2 children;
4. Vincent Jundt, 33, with one child;
5. John Kainer, 46, with one child;
6. Ignatz Kraft, 36, with 2 children;
7. Joseph Kohlman, 33, with 3 children;
8. Frank Kohlruss, 25, without children;
9. Joseph Kuffner, 34, with 3 children;
10. Wendel Maffenbeier, 55, with 3 children;
11. Theofil Muchowski, 22, single;
12. Frank Muhr, single;
13. Frank Reiss, 28, without children;
14. Frank Runge, 38, with 4 children;
15. Joseph Rollheiser, 35, with 4 children;
16. Frank Rotter, single;
17. John Schreier, 50, with 2 children;
18. Alex. Sibel, 43, with 2 children;

19. Michael Stengel, 55, with 4 children;
20. Ignatz Untereiner, 26, without children;
21. Joachim Untereiner, 55, with 5 children;
22. Jacob Volk, 48, with 3 children;
23. Valentine Weimer, 60, with 3 children;
24. Theobald Zimmermann, 28, with 2 children.

Some of the above families who were without children were blessed with children during the succeeding years. The odd one may have come a year earlier or later than listed above, as it is impossible to determine the exact date in some instances. However, the year 1905 already found a fairly populous community in this district which was to form the nucleus of a future parish. It should be remarked also that several of these families had landed as immigrants at Qu'Appelle in 1901 and 1902, but did not take up a homestead and settle permanently in this district until 1903, or even 1904 or 1905.

Odessa is located about half way between Indian Head to the north and Francis to the south: 22 and 17 miles from these towns respectively. Since travel in those early days was very slow, it became general practise for families which lived in the south to stop over at the Half-way House, located on NW 10-14-16, about 3 miles north west of the present village of Odessa. This was the hospitable home of Messrs Dan Carr and Hubert. Thus travellers to Indian Head or to Qu'Appelle, where they purchased essential supplies, by stopping overnight at this house, were able to make the round trip in 2 days.

Homesteads

What attracted these settlers to this district was the free Homestead which the Government allotted to every colonist. A homestead was a quarter section (160 acres)

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of land given gratis, except for $10.00 for inscription, to those who promised to build a residence on the land and to cultivate at least 10 acres a year. After 3 years, the government granted deeds and Title of ownership to those who fulfilled these easy conditions. Those eligible for a homstead were fathers of families, widows, and boys of 18 years of age, unmarried, but living with their parents.

Those fulfilling these conditions and acquiring Title were given the additional privilege of buying by pre-emption, at very nominal cost per acre, additional crown land. Such easy conditions encouraged the early colonists to endure the inevitable hardships in order to increase their land holdings and so provide land for their children.

The Railroad

In the Autumn of 1907 came the railroad. The Canadian Northern Railway, later to become the Canadian National Railways, surveyed the townsite and located its station on SW 30-15-13. This then became the site of the Village of Odessa. The Post Office, one half mile east of this site, was given the name of Magna. Caswell's General Store was opened.

But the real developement came in 1908. Among the business places opened this year were the following: John Neigel General Store; Wagman and Heintz Hardware; Moser Brothers, Implements; Steve Hoffart, Livery; and Saskatchewan Lumber Company. The Post Office was entrusted to Niel Moser. An hotel was built the following year. Four elevators were built at Odessa within 3 years, thus indicating how quickly the community developed and what a volume of grain this newly opened land yielded.

Village Incorporated

In 1911, the name MAGNA was changed to ODESSA, which the village and district still retains. This same year, the village was incorporated and a new school district was erected for the village and immediate vicinity. The rural area of the Odessa district forms part of the Rural Municipality of Francis, No. 127.

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CHAPTER III

FIFTY YEARS OF PROGRESS

Concerned as the pioneers were with the problem of making a living and of establishing themselves, their interests nevertheless ranged also to other fields. They were civic and religious minded. They were generally cooperative and mutually helpful in trying to build a congenial and progressive community.

Further on we shall recount their efforts to build their church, their school, and their other institutions. Here we must recount how the new settlement flourished and how it developed during the past 50 years.

In 1904 about 60 families had already established their homesteads here. But there were no roads, no convenient market facilities, in fact, no conveniences of any kind. And if there had been, the people were so extremely poor that they would have been unable to afford them.

But they did acquire the most necessary farm implements. For thrashing their crops they contracted with custom thrashers such as Colin McLean of Indian Head, who would come with a lumbering steam engine and thrashing separator manned with a crew of 15 to 25 men. What a thrilling time, thrashing time was! — with the women vying to prepare enormous and appetizing meals for ravenous workers. Their means of travel was first by stone-boat, but this was soon replaced by a heavy, jogging wagon; and as their condition improved, they provided snappy buggies, or, if the family was large, as it often was, smart democrats with a pair of fast ponies

By 1907 several of the new settlers had already purchased their own thrashing outfits and passed necessary examination to operate the steam engines. Despite low prices for their products and low wages generally prevailing, many such signs of progress appeared in the new community. And this was given a still greater impetus with the advent of the railroad.

War

Accordingly, when the first World War broke out in 1914, Odessa was already a thriving community with fair market roads and all essential services. Practically all the early settlers had already taken out their Naturalization Papers and were generally proving themselves excellent citizens.

Then came the tragic world war. The status of these people of Germanic origin was immediately suspect in some spheres. The older folk could speak practically no English, and the younger element had had little opportunity of acquiring an education amid the vicissitudes of a pioneering life and consequently spoke English only imperfectly.

The call to military service was therefore little understood and elicited little response from these people. Although they had already and amply proved their loyalty and steadfastly strove to be law-abiding citizens, they had some sympathy with the German and Austrian enemies whose kin they were and whose language they spoke. But none allowed these natural sentimental sympathies to obscure their duties to their newly adopted and freely chosen fatherland — Canada. They therefore lived these four years under a cloud.

When military conscription was introduced and they were at the same time disfranchised in 1917, they resented keenly the fact that they were expected to give their sons to the military service but were at the same time denied the privileges of a good citizen. From the time of their arrival in this country, they had taken a deep interest in politics; they had scrupulously cast their ballots, for the vote was a precious privilege to them; they had peacefully and democratically exercised their rights to local self-government.

But the war also brought high prices for their products, and notwithstanding certain restrictions and political handicaps, these new Canadians quickly improved their economic condition and rapidly developed their new Odessa community. Out of their affluence, brought about by wartime prices, they responded generously to every call of charity. Their own experience had taught them the bitterness of poverty and suffering — and after the war, when appeals for the hungry and destitute in Europe reached them, they offered their alms without stint.

Happier Days

The war over, a few more families, refugees from a Russia now turned to Communism, were admitted to Canada and also came to settle in the Odessa district. The Ursuline Sisters were brought to the village to teach in the school. With automobiles replacing buggies and horses, emphasis was placed on improved roads. When provincial highways were marked and surveyed, Highway No. 16 was directed through Odessa and it brought the village into more intimate contact with neighboring towns and with the city of Regina.

The General Stores of Kleckner's Limited and Sebastian Frass, the Implement businesses of James Gerein, Felix Millius and Joseph Kaufman, the Hardware store of J. P. Schroeder — these were now the principal retail establishments of Odessa. Practically all were immigrants who had so far improved their education and so thoroughly adapted themselves to the Canadian economy, that they won general esteem.

A new school, a new church — these became the vehicles of a new cultural developement. Movies, and soon Talkies, were introduced. Concerts, dramas, even a Brass Band under the direction of Joseph Selinger who commuted weekly from Regina to train it — these fostered a taste for higher refinement. Rural telephones brought the neighbors closer together and into more intimate contact with the village.

Athletics, especially baseball, was promoted with energetic zeal and universal support. Greater affluence also made it possible for parents to send some of the more talented boys and girls to college and university, for these people valued education highly and desired to provide their children with opportunities which had been denied to themselves. The Odessa Village School, as we shall see later, introduced High School classes and helped to raise the general level of education. Social life in the earlier days had been restricted to the occasional well chaperoned dance in private homes. Later, as more commodious homes and barns replaced the original sod huts, house-warmings, barn-dances, weddings and christenings brought together young and old. An odd keg of beer and the lively tunes of a fiddle harmonica or organ combined to create an atmosphere of conviviality and innocent diversion.

Transition

Those were the happy, but by no means carefree, days of our cheerful, industrious, pioneering forebears. Almost imperceptibly but very fast, after World War I, a change came over the community. More modern machinery appeared on the farms; tractors began to replace steam thrashers; autos and trucks in ever increasing numbers displaced the horse — hitherto the pride of old people; electric power plants and radios began to appear. Machine sheds replaced the earlier mammoth barns — the mark of prosperity in the eyes of the Old-timers. Paint too, sometimes in wierd combinations, on their farm buildings, marked the affluence, of these people. In a word, greater comfort and a variety of conveniences and modern appliances vastly improved the living conditions of these sons of our first settlers.

Depression

During those earlier years, late-ripening Marquis wheat was generally grown and the farmers were constantly beset with the hazard of frost which not infrequently wiped out a promising harvest in a single night. Hail at times cut a swath through sections of the community and left the farmer without redress, for there was no hail insurance in the early days.

But far greater trials to the tenacity of these people was in store between 1929 and 1940. The price of grain fell to the lowest point in their experience. Drought withered and shrivelled not only the crops but also the prairie pastures so that even the livestock became living skeletons. Sloughs dried out and even wells ran dry. Winds whipped up the dry dust in the fields and billowed it across the country and piled it like snowbanks of sand-dunes wherever any obstacle offered shelter. Dust storms so black and dense that the very sun was obscured and lights had to burn in the daytime in homes and on autos on the highway, and their silt filtered through every crevice into the homes and vitiated the very atmosphere.

In several years too, though moisture came and promised a crop, swarms of grasshoppers so dense as to form a shimmering cloud in the sky against the sun, descended on the fields and consumed what wind and dust had left uncovered and exposed. Rust, a most pernicious disease to the grain, so weakened the stem that the ear of grain dried up and yielded little or nothing. Even insects, sawflies and cut-worms, seemed to ally with this manifold menace to the farmers' crops.

This era of drought also brought a water problem to the village. Aside from the town well, no water was available for stock or for fire-fighting, should this become necessary. At the instance of the Church trustees, the parish donated two acres of land to the village for a dugout. The village, with the help of the P.F.R.A. built it at its present location where it has been very useful ever since as a stock-watering place. Hence it has helped to keep the village streets clean and at the same time provided water, ample water, for the skating and curling rinks.

It is no wonder that some farmers who had patiently endured the hardships of the pioneers finally became disheartened during the Thirsty Thirties. This was a period when many moved to other parts of Canada, to British Columbia, notably Kelowna and Vancouver, to Ontario, and even to the United States. Hence the population of the district decreased somewhat during these years.

But the overwhelming majority remained and hopefully continued to till their fields. In the depths of the depression, when they had a surplus of vegetables,

if nothing else, they consigned these in carloads to other communities which were even harder hit, e.g., to Mankota and Billimun in 1932. In later years, when local conditions became still more desperate, other communities, especially in Ontario, shipped carloads of vegetables, fruits, fish and numberless bundles of clothes for distribution here. Fortunately, the governments and railways cooperated for the transportation, for the local people could not have paid it. Our people should never forget that they were the beneficiaries of boundless charity in the darkest days during these 50 years.

This also was a period of moral decay, for pressed by necessity, almost everyone was forced to look to the governments for some form of relief. Feed for the stock, clothes for the children, food for the family, — everything had to be sought from government relief officials. To K. A. Righetti, Odessa Councillor and to Christian Lorenz, Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Francis, goes much credit for their tireless and selfless efforts to alleviate suffering and to supply these needs.

But it is no wonder that some, rebuffed in their efforts to obtain relief, depressed by the urgent needs of their dear ones, and deprived of hope in a more promising future which seemed to recede further with each depression year — it is little wonder that they sometimes drowned their anxiety in excessive drink, or in frequent dances, or through Sunday profanation, and that a cry for the repudiation of debts was raised by many.

War Again

In 1939, while still smarting under the lash of the depression, the drums of war again rolled out. But what a change had come over the Odessa community since 1918. No longer were these people under a cloud. In scores the young men of the district hastened to the recruiting depots to offer their services to their country in the army, air force, or navy. Even our thriving Catholic Youth Crusade had to disband, for practically all its members were on active service. Three of them, Adam J. Gerein, Frank Z. Zacher, and Johnny Schwab fell on the field of honour and did not return. The Deutscher family sent eight of its sons into the service, and several others sent 2 or 3 of their children. Throughout the war, special prayers for our soldiers were recited daily after Low Masses.

The following tribute, applicable to many in the community, will be of interest: "Ottawa, May 22, (1943) (CP) — The house of commons applauded heartily Friday when Air Minister Power paid tribute to the Deutscher family of Odessa, Sask., — immigrants from central Europe who now have eight sons in the R.C.A.F. — as "Canadians in the fullest and truest sense of that description."

"He knows what total war means," said Gordon Graydon, Progressive Conservative house leader, referring to the father.

Following is what Major Power said:

"In 1900, there came from central Europe a young girl; and she was followed to Canada a year later by a young carpenter from the same district. These two who had come in search of the freedom of the new world, were married in Canada and settled at Odessa, Sask.

He prospered as a carpenter and contractor and Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Deutscher had 13 children. This is the measure of the value they place upon the freedom they found in Canada — eight of their sons are in the R. C. A. F., to fight in defense of the liberty their parents discovered in this Dominion.

Surely there could be no greater manifestation of generous citizenship and supreme patriotism than that provided by these "new Canadians" and their 8 sons.

I say "new Canadians" merely because Mr. and Mrs. Deutscher were not born in this country. They are Canadians in the fullest and truest sense of that description."

In comment we might add that a ninth son, then too young, is now a Petty Officer in the Canadian navy.

Following is a complete list of the Odessa boys who served during World War II.

Roll of Honour

Our Dead

Adam J. Gerein
John Schwab
Frank Zacher

On Active Service

Pte. J. A. Baumgartner
Pte. B. G. Bechard
Pte. R. A. Bechard
Pte. H. Bolton
Pte. K. Buehler
L.A.W. N. Curtz
F/S A. E. Deutscher
Sgt. A. F. Deutscher
F/O H. F. Deutscher
Cpl. A. J. Deutscher
F/Lt. J. C. Deutscher (DFC)
L.A.C. J. L. Deutscher
F/O M. S. Deutscher
F/Lt. R. J. Deutscher
L/Cpl. J. Fletcher
Pte. G. Folk
Cpl. T. W. Folk
A/C A. J. Frass
F/Sgt. A. J. Gerein
W.O. J. J. Gerein
Sgt. J. J. Gerein
Pte. O. Glenn
Pte. A. Gorski
L.A.C. F. G. Griffin
Pte. A. Gruber
P/O C. Haines
Pte. P. G. Harlos
AC1 W. H. Harlos
Gnr. H. Heilman
Cpl. J. Hoffert
F/Sgt. M. Hoffert
Pte. J. Holzapfel
Pte. J. F. Hoffman
Sgn. W. R. Hoffman
Sto. K. Kattler
F/O F. J. Kaufman
Pte. J. Kleckner
L.A.C. C. Klein
Sgt. J. Klein
Pte. M. J. Kopp
Pte. J. Knoll
Pte. N. Kraft
Pte. J. S. Leuer
Pte. J. Mayer
Pte. J. Millius
F/O R. Millius
Pte. J. A. Moser
Pte. V. Moser
L/Cpl. R. McLean
L.A.W. R. McLean
S/Sgt. A. Nell
Pte. A. Ortman
Pte. J. Ortman
L.A.W. M. Ortman
Pte. R. E. Quade
Cpl. A. K. Righetti
Sto. J. M. Righetti
F/O P. Righetti
Pte. A. Runge
Pte. A. G. Runge
Pte. S. Runge
Pte. J. A. Salie
Pte. A. Schaaf
Pte. A. Schaffer
Pte. V. Schaffer
Sgt. B. J. Schatz
Pte. F. G. Schatz
Pte. A. F. R. Schneider
Pte. F. L. Schneider
Pte. J. J. Schneider
Pte. L. Schneider
Sgt. C. A. Schwab
Cpl. L. Schwab
Pte. W. Shawaga
L.A.C. W. Thompson
Pte. J. Untereiner
Sgt. K. Untereiner
A.C.2 A. W. Vogt
Pte. H. Vogt
Pte. J. L. Vogt
Pte. W. Vogt
B. Weichel
Pte. P. Weichel
F/O C. A. Wild
Pte. F. J. Wild
Cpl. G. Wiome
L.A.W. A. Wolfe
S/Sgt. H. Wolfe
A/B J. E. Wood
Y2C J. M. Wood (USNR)
Y2C M. H. Wood (USNR)
A.C.1 A. Zacher
L/Cpl. F. X. Zacher
Pte. J. J. Zacher
Cpl. P. Zacher
P/O P. Zerr

The following is a list of the Odessa boys who are at present on active service in Her Majesty's Forces:

F-L Melchior Hoffart;
F-L Edwin Leboldus
F-O Leonard Eisler
Petty Officer Lloyd Deutscher
Constable Raymund Leurer, R. C. M. P.
Anton Frass
James Leurer
Edward Zacher
Valentine Klein
George Frass

After the war, when most of the boys had returned to civilian life, the Odessa Citizens' Rehabilitation Committee was set up. To crown its work, it organized an Odessa Veterans' Day on Easter Monday, April, 22, 1946. Following a Mass of Thanksgiving, a "Welcome Home Banquet" was tendered the boys by the Altar Society, a Memorial Plaque and Honor Roll was unveiled and Honor Scrolls presented to the returned boys. Speakers on the occasion were Major E. M. Culliton and the Hon. Col. Rev. J. C. Keohan.

Canada had been hospitable and generous to these people, and now when danger threatened they responded nobly. While their youth sallied forth in arms, those who remained toiled the more industriously. An era of better crops and higher prices brought heightened prosperity — and of their abundance they poured their treasure into Victory Bonds and War Savings Certificates to greatly over-subscribe every quota allotted to the Odessa district. Their hearts abounded whenever a call for the Red Cross, Knights of Columbus Huts, or for other War Services was made. In a word, no community anywhere in this, their new fatherland, excelled the patriotism, the unselfish service and devotion of the Odessa residents, to Our Sovereign and to the cause which our country had espoused.

Post-war Progress

The last years of the war and the immediate post-war years were a period of remarkable progress in the district. March 1943 brought the biggest snow storm in our memory so that our basement church was entirely covered by a huge drift. It was also a harbinger of still more bountiful crops. The men of the parish shovelled tunnels to the church doors so that we could enter for services.

On July 4, 1943, the Odessa Saving and Credit Union Ltd., was organized following several months of study by a group of public spirited men at the rectory during the winter and spring months. Even though economic conditions had improved greatly after the war and the need for credit was less general and less immediate, the Credit Union rendered impressive services to the district and increased its assets to over $75,000 within its first ten years, thus enabling it to finance the debt of the new parish church in 1953.

The Odessa parish had 2 blocks of land subdivided into lots to provide sites for additional homes in 1945. Several comfortable houses were built in the village and most of the older houses were improved and painted. A few farmers moved to town to facilitate the education of their children, and planned to farm from town. By 1950 practically all farmers owned their land unencumbered by debt and few renters remained in the community. The population of the district also increased

steadily during these years and in 1950 reached a total of 151 Catholic families in the parish.

In January 1948 a Hall Building Committee comprised of Messrs. A. F. Seiferling, C. F. Runge, John J. Gerein, Felix Kraft and Frank J. Wild, was elected and sponsored a drive for funds in May. Under the supervision of Adam Wild and Peter Schneider construction began on June 1, and the Hall was ready for use on June 30, though the interior was left unfinished until December when the people had more time. All labour was generously donated and the Hall, when completed, was completely free of debt. This Hall was to serve as a temporary church in 1953 while the new church was under construction, and in the meantime it promoted social harmony in the parish, provided a stage and auditorium for our students, and offered facilities through which more than $15,000 was raised in the following five years for our Church Building Fund.

Decline

Following a long series of excellent crops, came 1949 when drought recurred and the crop was almost a total failure. The year 1950 was more promising, but a plague of grasshoppers and an unusually early frost ruined the quality and decreased the yield. In 1951 an excellent crop was again ruined by persistent rain and snow during the thrashing season, so that the grain was all tough and damp and consequently difficult to market. However, compensation came in 1952 when the district harvested the best crop in its history — yield, grade, price and harvesting conditions being ideal.

Hampered by 3 successive poor crops, a moderate decline came over the community. In 1949, the parish reached a peak of 154 families counting 723 souls. But in 1950 a new mission church was built at Francis, and 12 families on the southern extremity of the parish were transferred to the new mission. Moreover, during the same year 12 other families moved to Regina and to other parishes, thus reducing our population to 131 families with 673 souls.

Another monument to progress was the construction of a two sheet Curling Rink in the autumn of 1950. The Odessa Cooperative Curling Association was organized to finance and build the rink. Money was also raised by raffles and other activities. The Odessa Catholic Men's Club sponsored a carnival in the Hall which cleared $815.29 as a contribution to the new rink which was erected adjacent to our open air skating rink, thus providing excellent winter sport for the young people who used a room in the curling rink as a dressing room.

Municipal Government

When Saskatchewan became an autonomous province in 1905, the district of Odessa had already been settled by more than 75 families. The school districts had been organized and were maintained by taxes which the school trustees imposed and collected locally, generally through the school treasurer who was paid about 2 per cent of the amount collected. It is interesting to note for instance that the Sibel Plains School levied only $500.00 on April 20, 1905 to meet expenses and to keep the school open during 1905. As late as 1908 a school tax rate of only 4 cents an acre was struck by the Sibel Plains District.

Once the Province was erected, developement came quickly. The Rural Municipality of Francis, No. 127, was set up, and the Odessa district constituted its north east corner. The new municipality soon took over the role of tax collector; the school districts prepared a budget of their anticipated expenses for the year, but the

municipality collected these school taxes along with the municipal taxes which were needed for building roads, bridges and other services. When the Village of Odessa was incorporated in 1911, it elected its own Village Council and levied and collected both village and school taxes.

From the very beginning, these immigrant settlers, of whom but few spoke English and fewer still could read or write English, took a very active part in public affairs. They were jealous of the privilege of organizing and administering their schools. They cherished the privilege of electing their own fellow settlers to responsible offices on both the municipal and village councils.

In provincial and federal politics they were less articulate, but they showed a keen citizen's interest by religiously casting their ballots. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal Party had been in power and had welcomed the bulk of these early colonists and had given them sympathetic treatment, so it was almost inevitable that their political loyalty favoured the Liberals, particularly later, after the 1917 conscription and disenfranchisement issues, through which the Union Government under Conservative Leader, Sir Robert Borden, had alienated their good will.

Probably one of the proudest achievements of these immigrant Canadians was their succesful provincial election campaign in 1924, when they elected Anton Huck of Vibank, a fellow immigrant, to the Saskatchewan Legislature, and re-elected him in 1928.

Mention should perhaps also be made of some of the outstanding men who served on the various local government councils, though it is obviously impossible to mention all in this summary sketch. Foremost among them was Christian Lorenz, of Vibank, who was reeve of the Rural Municipality of Francis for about 30 years until he was replaced in 1941 by Anton G. Vogt, son of Joseph Vogt who had helped to organize St. Wendelin School District in 1905 and who served on the Odessa Church Board until his death in 1936. Among the Municipal Councillors who served long terms in the early days and during the difficult depression years, Mr. K. A. Righetti deserves special mention.

On the Village Council, the following business men served varying terms, but all contributed in various degrees to the harmonious and steady development of Odessa: Niel Moser, John Kleckner, J. P. Schroeder, James Gerein, Felix Millius, Sebastian Frass, Conrad Wild and others. All these men, though possessed of little formal education, by dint of personal application and fired by civic pride, contributed much to the community, and richly deserved the trust which their fellow pioneers reposed in them.

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CHAPTER IV

A NEW MISSION

As already noted, almost without exception, the new settlers in the Odessa district were Catholic. By 1905 the district was already fairly populous and begging for the services of a priest, for they formed the nucleus of a flourishing parish. In 1905 these people therefore built a small rectory adjacent to the Sibel Plains School for the convenience of visiting missionary priests.

This was the first result of a meeting held in the home of Matthias Zacher for the purpose of discussing the possibility of building a church. Hitherto, Mass had been said occasionally in private homes, whenever a priest could come from St. Joseph's, Balgonie, Qu'Appelle or Wolseley. The first Mass seems to have been said in the fall of 1903 in the home of Joseph Herman, 2 miles south of the present village, by Father Van Kiester who had come from Qu'Appelle. It was a notable event when everybody from far and wide came for confession and communion. Conrad Wild was the driver who brought him from Qu'Appelle and took him back by buggy.

After 1905 Mass was offered more frequently in the district by both Father A. J. Janssen who occasionally visited the Odessa vicinity from St. Paul's at Vibank, and by Father Van de Velde who came periodically from Mutrie and Montmartre during 1906 and 1907. It may be remarked that these early priests were conveyed from house to house by the early settlers and that they said Mass in many of the private homes; among others, in the homes of K. Herbach, Matt. Zacher, Joseph Frasz and Lukas Vogt.

As far as can be determined, the first new settlers to be married in this district were Adolph Tosczak and Juliana Deutscher. Their marriage was blessed in 1903 by Father Van de Velde at St. Paul's Church near Vibank. But the first wedding which actually took place within the Odessa district was a double wedding in 1905, performed in St. Stephen's School, when Rudolph F. Deutscher married Mathilda Gorski and Conrad Gorski married Justina Deutscher.

Cemetries

Death too visited the nascent community, and a sacred place for the dead had to be provided by the Christian sentiments of these people. Hence two cemetries were provided before the village was established.

The first cemetry was opened a few miles south of the present site of the village on land bought from Mr. Maffenbeier. This was opened for use in 1904 on the SW corner of section 18-15-13. The first funeral seems to have been that of a young woman, Miss Long. Only 15 or 20 persons were interred in this cemetry. When the village of Odessa was founded, this cemetry was abandoned and the corpses reinterred in the present cemetry north of the village.

The second cemetry was located on an acre of land on the east side of SE 36-15-14. This is about one mile north of the village and still serves as parish cemetry. The land was donated by Lukas Vogt. In 1909 it was enlarged by the purchase of an adjoining half acre from Mr. Vogt for $15.00.

A Flourishing Mission

In 1907 the local settlers bought a site for the future parish from the C. N. Townsite Properties. On this site, abutting on the south of the railway right of way, they planned to build their church. As a preparation, the rectory, which had been built near the Sibel Plains School, was moved to the new site. As the site was small -- only one acre – two additional acres were bought the following year

The summer of 1908 witnessed the start on the excavation for the proposed church. This year also the Reverend Father John Joseph Schelbert, to whose energy and vision much of the district's developement is due, began to pay regular visits for divine services. Under his supervision the first modest church was finished this same autumn and dedicated to St. Wendelin. The first church trustees were Messrs. Lukas Vogt, Sr, John Schatz, Frank Runge and George Feser. Under their leadership the Faithful offered inspiring cooperation to Father Schelbert.

The members of the new mission signed personal notes to the value of $1,020.00 and deposited them in the bank as collateral for a loan of $2,260.00. In addition, by contributing as generously as their penury permitted, they raised $6,034.05 for the purpose of building their new church. Considering the poverty of these people, their distance from town, the slow neans of travel and the manifold handicaps, this is a marvellous expression of Faith, loyalty and generosity.

Blumenfeld

Before proceeding with the history of the parish, something should be added about the mission of Blumenfeld. A church had been built on land donated by Anton F. Gerein on the Northwest corner of SW 1-15-15 W 2, in the year 1906.

REV. J. J. SCHELBERT

At that time the Blumenfeld district was under the cure of Father Van de Velde who was pastor of St Paul's. It continued to be served from St. Paul's until 1909 when Father A. J. Janssen was appointed pastor of Sedley and was entrusted with the mission of Blumenfeld.

In 1908 Father Janssen had brought Archbishop Langevin for his first pastoral visitation. The Archbishop happened to be at St. Joseph's, Balgonie, at the time, and also visited Sedley on this occasion. Archbishop Langevin was solemnly received by a group of young men on horseback. The Title to the church was given to the Archbishop who thereupon blessed the church.

For the next five years, Blumenfeld was served by Father Janssen from Sedley. In 1916, with the improvement of the roads and the improving facilities for travel, and due to the fact that Blumenfeld was only 6 miles from both Sedley and Vibank, it was decided to stop holding services at this mission and to assign the people attending there to the three parishes of Odessa, Sedley and Vibank.

Accordingly, Father Schelbert, with the assent of Father Janssen of Sedley and Father Schorr of Odessa, and with the approval of Archbishop Mathieu, divided the Blumenfeld district in such a way as to give the Faithful of the mission the most convenient and shortest possible route to one of the three other churches. There was some opposition and dissatisfaction, but in general, the people realized how reasonable the move was.

Finally, in 1926, all the church furnishings in Blumenfeld were divided among the three afforementioned parishes. Odessa received the bell, pews, organ, chalice, canopy and a number of vestments. The church building was sold to Mr. Alexander Mildenberger and the proceeds of the sale were used to pay off the balance of the debt which still rested on the church.

Eventful Years

A notable event of 1911 was the organization of a local branch of the VOLKS-VEREIN DEUTSCH-KANADISCHER KATHOLIKEN at a public meeting on August 20. On this occasion, Father Schelbert presided. Other speakers were Messrs. Theodore Schmitz, Anton Huck and Joseph Bergl. No less than 58 members were enrolled in a very short time, and this number eventually increased to well over 100. The first Executive elected consisted of Messrs. Carl Runge, President; George Feser, Vice-president; Joseph Vogt, Secretary; and Conrad Wild, Treasurer.

It may be remarked that the Volksverein was exceedingly active at Odessa until the war years suspended activity. After World War I it was revived and continued active again until World War II broke out. Its work and objectives were mainly social and cultural. But it also furnished evidence of the Catholic Faith and vitality which animated the members of this community in those early days — a spirit which fortunately still endures.

The year 1912 was a momentuos one for Odessa. For the first time a Bishop visited the mission in the person of Regina's new Bishop, the Most Rev. O. E. Mathieu, D. D. He came on Nov 21 and blessed the church and confirmed a class of 108 children.

This same year pews were purchased for the church at a cost of $466.00. A parish picnic was held for the first time, and it yielded a profit of $243.05.

In 1912 also, registers for Baptism, Marriage, Death etc., were opened for Odessa. Hitherto, all vital statistics were recorded in the registers of the various churches from which St. Wendelin's Mission had been served. Prior to 1912, most of these however were recorded in the Vibank registers. The first Baptism in the Odessa register is that of Eva Engel on Nov. 15, 1911, and the first marriage that of Stephen Engel and Maria Leier on Jan. 28, 1912, all registered by Father Schelbert.

On April 3, 1913 Rev. Father Bour, O.M.I., visited the mission and addressed the Volksverein. This year also, two trustees were elected in the persons of Lukas Vogt and John Schatz. As St. Wendelin's was still a mission with no resident pastor, the revenue was still quite low, totalling only $425.70.

The following year, 1914, brought prospects of a resident pastor, and the members of St. Wendelin began to manifest unusual activity. The rectory was enlarged and fixed up for a resident priest. Trustees elected were Messrs. Joseph Vogt, John Wild and John Schatz. A picnic yielded $102.80. A total of $1,132.50 was gathered of which $952,20 was spent. Finally, on Nov.14, 1914, Rev Peter Schorr was installed as resident pastor. Simultaneously, the name of St. Wendelin was changed and the new parish was dedicated to the HOLY FAMILY.

Congratulations!

To the Citizens of Odessa and District
Your Newly Completed
HOLY FAMILY CHURCH
Is a Credit to Your Community

SUPERIOR BRAND MILLWORK
BY
WESTERN MANUFACTURING
Company Limited
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CHAPTER V
HOLY FAMILY PARISH

REV. PETER SCHORR (†1952)
Pastor: 1914-24

Under Father Schorr's administration real enthusiasm pervaded the new parish and a genuine parish life began to flourish. On June 11, 1915 — a memorable day for Odessa — Archbishop Mathieu again visited the parish and this time confirmed 155 children. Father Schorr invited such notable speakers as Father Rapp, O.M.I. and Father Philip Funke, O.M.I., who not only stimulated spiritual life in the parish but also inspired the Volksverein to exceptional activity.

The following year was a disastrous one, for a storm did considerable damage to the church, pushing it to one side off its foundation. As a result considerable work was necessary this year. A contract was given to A. McDonald and Co., of Brandon, Man., for $1,050.00 whereby this firm raised and leveled the church and drew a number of iron rods through the nave to hold it together. At the same time $300.00 was paid to Karl Molter, Regina, for plastering and repainting.

Up to this time, the church and rectory were both south of the railroad right of way. The Village of Odessa, on the other hand, was developing on the village townsite north of the railroad. Thus it was the source of much inconvenience when evening devotions were held, especially in winter, or when trains happened to be at the station while people wanted to cross the tracks to go to the church on the south side. In 1919 a movement towards the eventual transfer of the church to the north side was launched.

Here a significant fact should be stated to evidence the deep Catholic Faith which animated these early settlers. The overwhelming majority of local people had always

FIRST ODESSA RECTORY
(1914-1927)

been Catholic, but the few Protestant people of the district also had a deep Faith and had also built a small church within the townsite, directly in front of the present school site. By 1919 this church was almost useless since most of the Protestant people had moved away. Hence, the question of moving this church some 9 miles south of Odessa, to serve a rural Protestant population centred there, made their site available for the parish. Accordingly, on Feb. 20, 1919, the two lots on which this church had stood was bought by the Holy Family Parish for $325.75.

Donations to the Church

By this time also, donations for the building of a new church began to come from the parishioners. Among the biggest of these were: $128.15 from Engelbert Reiss; $400 form K. A. Righetti; $200 form J. P Schroeder. There was already some dispute over the location of the proposed new church, a considerable number of people wishing to build on the site on the south side of the town, while others desired the church on the north side, i.e., within the village townsite.

Tribute should here also be paid to many of the Faithful for numerous and generous gifts made to the church. As is evident, the young parish was still poor and lacked much of the equipment which a well organ zed parish should have. On the arrival of the first pastor, the people came in large numbers to offer to purchase various articles and utensils which the church needed. Following is a list of these donations, made during the first years of Father Schorr's incumbency:

Monstrance, given by Lukas Vogt and John Schatz;
Main Altar, costing over $700, given by Frank Sax;
Sacred Heart Altar, with statue and candelebra, given by Karl A. Righetti;
Blessed Virgin Altar with statue, given by Young Ladies Society;
Candelebra for same, given by Joseph Vogt;

Statues: ST. WENDELIN, given by Wendel Wagman;
ST. JOHN EVANGELIST, given by John Wild:
ST. ANTHONY, given by Anton Bleischwitz;
ST. ALOYSIUS, given by Aloys Untereiner;
SORROWFUL MOTHER GROUP, given by Father Schorr;
TWO ANGELS, given by F. Baumgartner;
CHRISTMAS CRIB, given by N. Baumgartner
PICTURE of O. L. of PERPETUAL HELP in frame for processions. was painted by Father Metzger and donated by Anton Millius;

Mission Cross, with 4 foot corpus, was provided by the parish for the mission of 1920. This corpus was later broken in an accident and replaced by a new one in 1943 by Mrs. A. F. Gerein.

Stations of the cross, framed, donated by John Rist Sr. and Joseph Frasz;

Large Candelebra, also given by Frank Sax;

Pipe Organ, second hand, was purchased for $500 by a number of donors; rain water damaged it somewhat and it was later repaired. After its installation in the new church basement, it gradually deteriorated due to constant dampness and perspiration in winter. As a result, in 1940 it was beyond repair and had to be dismantled.

An iron cross was made by August Schneider and donated for use over the new church.

The large Crucifix which now stands in the cemetry was donated by Lukas Vogt and Joseph Schaefer; Mr. Alex Seibel made the cross and erected it.

Banners of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, were donated by Carl Runge, Sr. Other banners were purchased by the Apostleship of Prayer, the Altar Society and the Volksverein;

Copes were donated by Lukas Vogt, Jr., and Ignatz Untereiner;

A Communion Rail, specially made for the church in a Regina factory, was paid for by several parishioners.

A Large Ciborium, still in use, was donated by Steve and Joseph Hoffart;

The Confessional was donated by Joseph Vogt.

A New Church?

Many of these achievements were due to the efforts and selfless cooperation which the Trustees of the new parish have always given their pastor. During these eventful years, the following were among the more active trustees: Nickolaus Baumgartner, Karl A. Righetti, Frank Reiss: Joseph Vogt, Conrad Wild, John Wild, Anton Millius, Adam Schaffer, Raymond Weimer and Peter Krauss.

On Jan. 14, 1921, an important annual meeting was held at which several far-reaching decisions were made. The Dues for priest and church support were raised from $15.00 per annum to $18.00. The salary of the pastor was set at $1500 plus all stole fees.

This year also a large safe was bought at a cost of $320. It was also decided that the two lots purchased from the Protestant Church in Odessa were inadequate for our proposed church. Hence the decision to sell these to the Odessa School Board for a playground, and to purchase a Block of Unsubdivided land from the C. N. Townsite Properties Co. Ltd. This Block is located immediately north of the school and is the site of the present church, the basement of which was excavated and built in 1926.

Spiritual Growth

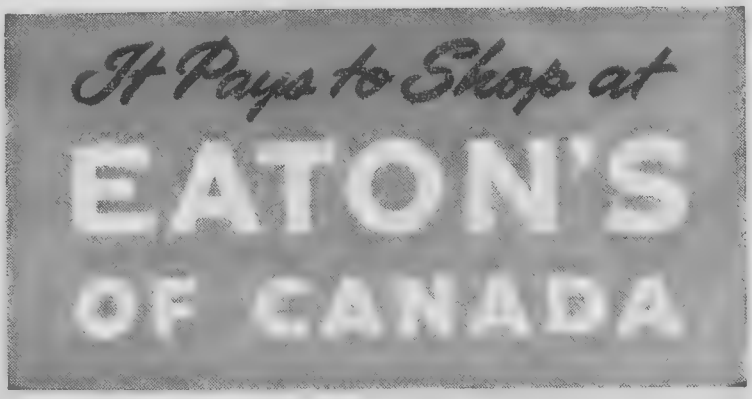
The annual meeting of 1922 appealed to each family to contribute an extra $2.00 for the renewal of insurance. An item of interest at this meeting was the resolution that "only those who paid their dues to the church should be acceptable as Godparents at Baptism or as witnesses at marriages."

The Christmas midnight Mass provided unusual solemnity this year due to a Solemn High Mass at which Fathers Blank, S. J., and Wilhelm assisted Father Schorr. During Lent, this year, and in all subsequent years, Stations of the Cross were held on Wednesday and Friday evenings. The 40 Hour Devotion, with day and night adoration, the May and October devotions were all well attended and testified to the growing spiritual fervour within the parish.

The year 1920 is noteworthy by the fact that it was decided to invite the Reverend Ursuline Sisters to Odessa to teach in the village school. Hence the Sports Day on June 26 had as its objective the raising of funds for the purchase of a residence for the Sisters. An official reception of the Sisters was held in the school on July 29.

This year also, a class of 28 children were admitted to First Holy Communion on July 15, and 145 children were confirmed by Archbishop Mathieu on August 16. A two week preparation had been given the children. The reception accorded the Archbishop on his visit was fervent; the Brass Band met and accompanied him together with a large group of well trained and orderly horsemen.

Special work was also done this summer to improve the condition of the cemetry.



Social Developement

One of his first concerns after his appointment to Odessa, was the organization by Father Schorr of an Altar Society. Since 1914, the women of the parish have been tireless in their efforts to raise necessary funds, to embellish and beautify the church and altar, to render services without number to other parochial organizations and to the pastor, and to sponsor every deserving work assigned to them. In recent years, for instance, they have sponsored such public welfare activities as Baby Clinics, Anti-tuberculosis X-Ray Clinics, and a variety of minor, but nonetheless general welfare, ventures.

In 1918, Father Schorr also organized the Apostleship of Prayer, obtaining the necessary literature and monthly Messengers in German from the U.S.A. Later, when these could no longer be obtained, interest in the Apostleship of Prayer lagged. But in 1939, when English had become more generally spoken it was revived with English leaflets and Messengers. Much credit for its progress is due to Mr K. A. Righetti who has been its secretary uninterruptedly since 1918.

An event of unusual moment was a Katholikentag held at Odessa on August 7 and 8, 1921, under the auspices of the local Volksverein. Priests and prominent lay speakers came from all parts of the province. A German play was produced by the local Volksverein. In every respect this event was successful and proved a powerful stimulant to a still more energetic life in the parish. The following year the Volksverein also made provision for special classes in German after school hours. The Odessa branch also pledged its support to the organization by Father Schelbert of the Western Printers Association Ltd., with a view to subsequently buying out the German Catholic paper "West Canada" and the German Protestant paper 'Courier', and amalgamating the two in a new and larger secular German weekly newspaper, "Der Courier", under Catholic direction.

It is worthy of note also that a Brass Band had also been organized at Odessa. Under the direction of Joseph Selinger, it became a feature attraction at the Odessa Sports Days and in a variety of social gatherings. An illustration of the amicable relations between Catholics and non-Catholics in the community may be cited in the fact that when Mrs. Schroeder began to train a choir for the new parish, the more conveniently located Protestant Church was placed at her disposal for practices.

The first and fundamental phase of the parish history came to a close with the death at Rochester, Minnesota, on July 6, 1924, of the Reverend Father Schelbert, pastor of Vibank. After 10 fruitful years as Odessa's Pastor and Founder, Rev. Father Schorr was transferred to Vibank to succeed Father Schelbert on July 13. His successor at Odessa was the Reverend Charles Sauner, D. D., erstwhile pastor of Wolseley. Father Schorr's departure was keenly regretted, for his quiet piety and tact had won the hearts of all. The different organizations vied with each other to present Farewell Gifts and memorial tokens to the departing parish priest of the Holy Family Parish.

CHAPTER VI

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

With the advent of a new pastor, a period of progress, hampered by the severe trials of the depression, a decade and more of light and darkness, dawned over Odessa. Father Sauner was installed as pastor on July 27, 1924. A parish meeting was held the same day, and it was decided to purchase the necessary furniture for the rectory. The rectory furniture during Father Schorr's incumbency had belonged to Father Schorr, and on his departure he took it along to Vibank where the rectory was also unfurnished and where he therefore needed it. A special collection realized $1,029.35 for this purpose. In addition, the rectory was painted at a cost of $118.83.

The same autumn a special appeal for the Sister's Residence was made together with an urgent request that Church Dues be paid.

Spiritual and Social

Under Father Sauner's administration the social aspect of parish life received an increased momentum. In 1924 a local branch of the Catholic Mutual Benefit Association was established. A Regina team came for the purpose of initiating the first members. The membership gradually increased to 50, but during the depression following 1930 it fell to about 6 members.

During the following years, all parish organizations continued to be exceedingly active. Teas or Kaffeekränzchen, plays and concerts, etc., were frequently held by the Altar Society, C.M.B.A., and Volksverein. The latter society always held an

REV. CHARLES SAUNER, D.D. (†1945)
Pastor: 1924-1939

annual banquet at which a special speaker was provided. Thus, e.g. in 1925, on Oct 11, the speaker was Rev. Fr. Kierdorff, O.M.I., and the banquet yielded a profit of $125.50 which was spent on the purchase of 100 chairs. Largely through the efforts of the Altar Society the church was frequently washed and cleaned. The Volksverein, conscious of the harm flowing from uncontrolled dances and entertainments, on Feb. 1, 1925, passed an interesting resolution to the effect that "all dances and entertainmnts be ended by one o'clock."

With the arrival of Father Sauner, the 40 Hour Devotion in the parish assumed a character of peculiar solemnity. As many as ten neighboring priests sometimes attended and assisted to add to the solemnity. Lenten Devotions, May and October Devotions, Sacred Heart Devotions etc., — all were popular. Catechism was given the children after Mass every Sunday. And so, by all these means, a more intense spiritual life was fostered in the parish.

A New Church

The year 1926 was memorable by the fact that the new basement for the projected new church was built. A committee of eight was appointed to promote the construction of the new church basement. The members of the committee were: Joseph Hoffart, Anselm Rothecker, Anton Millius, John Schatz, John Wild, K. A. Righetti, Adam Schaffer and Engelbert Reiss.

The work of excavating began on May 30. The site was north of the present school; permission had been obtained to close the street, so that the new church would be in the centre of the street and face south. The site is ideal and adds materially to the attractiveness of the village. The selection of this site is testimony of the vision of Father Sauner and his parishioners.

This same year the parish purchased an additional 76 acres of land adjoining the church property to the north from the C. N. Townsite Properties Co. Ltd. The first payment of $269.60 was made. It was then also properly fenced for the convenience of the village people who kept cows.

The Building Committee held a number of meetings as a prelude to the work that was to be done. The people gave very generously of time and work to dig, haul stones and gravel, and to aid in the carpentry, which was under the direction of Mr. R. F. Deutscher. Even the larger school children helped during recess. A marvellous and inspiring spirit prevailed.

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The new Basement Church was finished for Christmas. As a preparation for its opening, the Rev. Philip Funke, O.M.I. was invited to preach a Triduum on Dec. 22-24. Christmas this year evoked unusual fervour and joy among the Faithful.

It is interesting to note how the new structure was financed. The parishioners pledged themselves to pay $17,220.00, and of this, $4,907.75 was paid in cash before the end of the year. Besides this, free labour was given to the extent of $4,259.80. This was an exceptionally successful financial year, receipts totalling $9.142.82 Cash paid out for material for the new church basement were: $7,535.45 to the Securitv Lumber Co.: $360.58 to J. P Schroeder for hardware; and $675.44 for steel to the Dominion Bridge Co. Additional revenue this year came form a Bazaar, held in the new basement on Nov. 17-19. before its dedication for church services, which cleared $1,102.00, and a Sports Day on June 27, which netted $595.10. But in spite of such splendid revenues, insufficient cash was accumulated, and the parish had to negotiate a loan, as we shall see later.

Farewell

One of the original missionaries who had merited so well of the Odessa people during the early and trying days was the Reverend Father Richard Van de Velde. In 1926, ailing and aging, he decided to retire from his Kendal parish and to spend his declining years in his native Belgium. An appropriate Farewell Celebration at Kendal was attended by many of his Odessa friends, but the Odessa Parish also wished to give expression to its appreciation of his manifold services. Hence, he was prevailed upon to attend a memorable Farewell Party held in the Odessa school where the general sentiments of gratitude were expressed and a fitting presentation made. Not until December, 1944, owing to slow wartime communications, did the news reach here that Father Van de Velde, at the ripe age of 83 years, had died peacefully in 1943.

A New Rectory

The year 1927 was notable by the fact that a new rectory adjacent to the new church basement was built. On March 13 it was decided to demolish the old church and to use all possible material therefrom in the construction of the new rectory. On June 7 a contract was given to Mr. R. F. Deutscher to supervize the construction. The people again generously gave their time and labour. At the end of July, the lumber left over from the church was auctioned off.

The new rectory was built with every convenience, viz., electric light plant, lightening rods, running water and pressure system, hot water heating, etc. The principal items of expense were: $721.00 for furnace and plumbing; new lumber $1,500; Paint $85; hardware $252.95; Light Plant $196.95 etc. Much of this was not paid till the following year. The old rectory, south of the village, was sold to Mr. K. A. Righetti for $2,000 cash. Considerable furniture was also purchased for the new rectory at a cost of $950.80. Father Sauner moved into the new rectory during the week of October 9.

The following year a shallow well was dug by Ignatz Untereiner near the new rectory. At about the same time, the last payment on the land north of the church was made to the C.N. Townsite Properties Co. Ltd.

Other Events

The new church basement was also whitewashed and the last work on it completed during the Summer of 1927. On December 18 an announcement was made to the effect that the trustees had decided to assess every family $25 toward the cost of the rectory and another $25 towards the cost of the church.

An agreement was made on January 4, 1927 with the Ursuline Sisters, whereby clear Title to the Sisters' Residence was given to the Sisters.

The year 1928 was highlighted by the Silver Jubilee of the pastor, Father Sauner. In 4 years he had accomplished so much, spiritually and materially, that his people could with difficulty restrain their appreciation and affection. On October 7, a Solemn High Mass, attended by a large number of the clergy, marked the event in the church. This was followed by a banquet in the school where numerous gifts were presented and where the Right Rev. Mgr. A. J. Janssen was the featured speaker. His Grace, Archbishop Mathieu celebrated his Silver Episcopal Jubilee also in 1928, and a special collection was made in the parish for him. The parish also participated in the joy of the Church over the solution of the Roman Question by singing the Te Deum on March 10. And again, on July 7, in thanksgiving for the recovery of our King, the Te Deum was sung after Mass.

Likewise in 1928, Mr. J. P. Miller, the principal of the Odessa Village School for the previous 10 years, was appointed School Inspector. Mr. Mike Daly was appointed his successor and remained here for 2 years until his appointment to the Regina Separate School staff. His successor, in 1931, was Mr. John Eisler who still retains that position.

On June 10, 1928, the Feast of Corpus Christi, Rev. Frank Gerein who had been ordained at Vibank the previous Sunday, celebrated his First Solemn Mass at Odessa and carried the Blessed Sacrament in the procession.

Confirmation was administered here on August 23, 1928 by Bishop Prud'homme of Prince Albert and Saskatoon owing to the protracted illness of Archbishop Mathieu. On October 27, Archbishop Mathieu died, casting deep gloom over the parish.

Darker Days

The following year, crops began to fail. Besides, the depression was definitely upon us and economic stringency began to oppress the people. Scarce as money was, the parish was still able to raise $3,264.86 in 1929. Thereafter parish revenues steadily declined. This was largely due to the decision to ease the burden on the people by cutting the Pew Rent in half.

Mention should be made also of the fact that, due to the depression, a decay in morals seemed to set in. Twice during the summer, Father Sauner felt compelled to condemn a number of abuses which resulted from unsupervized dances, especially at Odessa Beach, which had been developed on a sandy lake about 7 miles north of the village. He pointed out the dangers and vigorously condemned public dances.

A New Archbishop

The year 1930 was notable in the reception of a new archbishop at Regina on May 21-22, in the person of the Most Rev. James Charles McGuigan, D.D., who is now

the Cardinal Archbishop of Toronto. Many of the Odessa Faithful made a pilgrimage to Regina to attend the solemnities of his reception and installation. They also contributed generously to a collection that a suitable presentation might be made to the new shepherd.

The new Archbishop was destined to administer the archdiocese during its most hazardous years. The people of Odessa, despite their own destitution and need, cooperated with the Archbishop's every plan in his endeavour not only to put the finances of the archidiocese and its parishes and institutions on a sounder basis, but also to promote the spiritual work of the Church. The attachment of his Odessa Faithful to Archbishop McGuigan was evident in the profound sense of loss which was universally felt and expressed when, after an administration of barely 5 years, he was transferred to the See of Toronto.

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CHAPTER VII

DEPRESSION YEARS

With 1931 began a period of grave difficulty for the parish. A long series of crop failures, due principally to persistent drought, so improverished the people, that with all their good will, very serious financial burdens could not be further carried.

Hence. the trustees with Father Sauner, succeeded in negotiating the sale of $15,000 in debentures in order to consolidate the parish debt. The year's ordinary revenue in 1931 amounted to only $1,265.25. The debentures yielded a net amount of $14,340.30. Thus the total revenue for the year was $15.605.85. The total expenditures amounted to $15.581.30 .Of these disbursements, the major ones were: Episcopal Corporation $5,537.10; Security Lumber Co. $4,000.00; Miss Dubray $810.00; Carl Franke $1,580.00; Other loans $1,024.00. The trustees during the entire depression era were Messrs. K. A. Righetti, Joseph Hoffart and Karl Tomaschefski. Mr. John Schatz was the caretaker of the church.

On July 19, in view of the disheartening crop prospects, Father Sauner announced that he would give up $1,000 of his salary, but the parish must pay its interest and $1,000 of its capital. Therefore, on every last Sunday of the month a special collection would be taken up for this purpose. He appealed to every family to offer $1.00 or $2.00; this would include their dues and pews.

The following year, for the first time, in an effort by the Archbishop to assist the parishes, a Diocesan Bazaar was held, and the Odessa parish too cooperated and accepted Bazaar Books. This, together with a loan from Father Sauner of $1,000 plus the ordinary revenue of the parish for the year amounting to $1,883.42 enabled the parish to meet its obligations.

In January 1933 the envelope collection system was introduced in the parish and met with general approval. Owing to the continued depression, this new system

URSULINE CONVENT
Odessa, Saskatchewan

facilitated the paying of dues and enabled the parish to issue printed Financial Reports annually.

During 1934 little of importance occurred, except the damage to the church roof which a high wind and dust storm tore away in June. A special collection to provide funds for repairs, yielded only $52.00 — a mute witness to the impoverishment of the Faithful. The repairs cost $325.00, of which $315.00 was paid to Mr. Thauberger for his professional work on the roof.

Charity

Although these years (1931-39) brought unprecedented financial difficulties to the administration of Father Sauner, the parishioners of Odessa did not lose their sense of Christian charity.

On Sept. 25, 1932 Fr. Sauner announced that a carload of vegetables would be loaded here. This was to be sent to Mankota and Billimun. Some vegetables were also gathered for the new Seminary which the Archbishop had opened at Regina. The people, though they had little crop, had a fair vegetable yield, and they contributed generously. Hence, it is not surprising that the parish also received generous gifts of carloads of vegetables and fruits in subsequent drought years.

Likwise in 1940, a vegetable collection was made in October when the Faithful contributed about 350 bags of potatoes etc., which were freely transported by truck and distributed among the institutions and the poor in Regina and at Lebret among the Indians.

In 1942 again, a small vegetable collection was made — this time for the Seminary and for Mercy Hospital and for the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Mr. Frass took the vegetables collected to the city and distributed them for the parish.

We might remark here that the practise of almsgiving has ever been a characteristic virtue of the good Christian. By this standard the parish of Odessa has at all times, even during the days of its own utter destitution, expressed its sympathy to the needy. Following World War I repeated collections were made for the poor, their own suffering and starving kindred in Germany and Russia. After World War II, the appeals of the Holy Father for the War Victims, Refugees and starving children met with a consistently generous response at Odessa. In fact, parish collections for charitable purposes have always exceeded collections for any other purpose — truly the mark of genuine Christian charity.

Notable Events

Despite depression, life moved on and the people of Odessa did not lose heart. A variety of ventures and activities, if on a modest scale and with little cost, testifies to the energetic will to live and thrive and the boundless hope that conditions would eventually improve. Following are some instances.

In 1931 a Regina group presented a Passion Play, and several other German and English dramatic pieces were prepared and presented during the year. The following year a Speaker's Club was organized with a view to the developement of this talent among its members.

Another consequence of these dramatic efforts was the organization in 1933 of a Glee Club. Thus, in the face of grave difficulties, the parish life was maintained.

A new venture, in 1933, was the introduction of Movies, which were later changed to Talkies. A Talkie machine was bought but not completely paid for until 1942. At regular intervals henceforth, shows, carefully selected, were presented in order to help finance the parish. Beneficial as these new Talkies were in many ways to the community, one baneful effect is that the former urge to prepare and present dramatic plays has disappeared — and this surely to the detriment of our young people, who now want their entertainment prepared for them rather than providing it themselves by their own efforts and to their own cultural benefit.

When the CATHOLIC YOUTH CRUSADE was organized and held its first convention at Regina on July 30, 1936, a good Odessa representation attended. Likewise, the Volksverein sent several delegates to the Katholikentag at Regina on July 20-30, 1936.

Requiem

These years of trial also brought death to three members of the parish who had rendered exceptional services to the community.

Mr. Valentine Gessner died on Oct. 26, 1932 and was buried two days later. He very generously left his house to the parish in his will. This was sold to Mr. John Frasz for $225 for the benefit of the parish.

In 1935 the parish lamented the death of Mr. Joseph Vogt. He had been one of the most active, dependable and generous members of the parish from its very foundation.

Three years later, on Sept. 11, 1938, Mr. Frank Sax passed away. Mr. Sax had also been exceedingly generous to the parish. For many years he had also acted as sacristan and deserved highly of the Church.

Spiritual Milestones

Notwithstanding the general poverty of these years, the spiritual life of the parish thrived vigorously. Year after year, the 40 Hours Devotion, Lenten Devotions, May and October as well as June Devotions, brought the Faithful to Church in impressive numbers. A weekly Holy Hour of Reparation was introduced in 1938 to implore Heaven's benediction upon the crops. But several other events and innovations also testify to the vigor of the spiritual life in the parish during these years.

Thus, on May 10, 1931, the parish held a Eucharistic Congress as prescribed by the Archbishop. On Sept. 13, it was announced that, even though the children were prepared, no confirmation would be given by the new Archbishop this year, due to his illness at the time.

The cemetry, which dust storms had damaged and devastated repeatedly during these years, was also the object of the constant solicitude of the Faithful. In 1932, and again in 1938, they turned out in large numbers to remove the dust which had blown in and to plant flowers on the graves of their dear dead. In 1942, when the drifting dust had ceased to drift and more promising conditions loomed, two cemetry bees were organized in June and October to remove weeds and blow dirt with scrappers and horses and to haul gravel on the main paths which form a cross to divide the cemetry into four squares.

The first pastoral visitation of Archbishop McGuigan on Oct. 28, 1932 brought consolation and revived hope to a disheartened parish. On this occasion he confirmed 104 children, among whom were a number of 6 year old children whom Fr. Sauner had admitted. His gentle kindness on this occasion so ingratiated him in the hearts of his Odessa Faithful that his departure for Toronto, 2 years later, was the more keenly felt by them.

The highlight of 1935 was the advent of a new Archbishop on Sept. 25-26 in the person of Archbishop P. J. Monahan, D. D. A representative delegation from Odessa attended his installation at Regina, and on Nov 17 he already repaid them by visiting Odessa. On this occasion, like his venerated predecessor, he consoled the people amid their misfortunes and dispensed encouragement and renewed determination to carry on despite incredible obstacles.

The Jubilee Year was proclaimed in the parish on April 2, 1933 and the people generally participated in the spiritual benefits. The highlight of the year was a Mission directed by Rev. Fr. Charles. O. F. M., on Oct 22-29. On the last day, thanks to the assistance of Rev. P. Albert, O. P., the Archconfraternity of the Holy Rosary was established in the parish.

The Religious Vacation School movement was introduced in the parish in 1936 and the following year the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood was established in the village school. Both have achieved gratifying results year since then.

A Pastor's Farewell

The year 1938 was Father Sauner's last at Odessa. Leaving in October, he was replaced temporarily by Father S. F. Leibel who administered the parish until a new pastor arrived on Dec. 31, 1938.

Father Sauner had rendered unselfish service to the parish for almost 15 years. Although most of his pastorate who cast in the time of depression, he had laid enduring foundations for a future church and a developing congregation. The people generally felt a deep affection for him and gave him whole-hearted cooperation — for without this his achievements would have been impossible.

It was therefore a day when emotions overflowed — the day on which he returned for a Farewell program, on Nov. 13, prior to leaving to assume the pastorate of Windthorst. He preached a farewell sermon at Mass in the morning and then attended a Farewell Dinner and Program in the school where suitable addresses and presentations by the different parochial organizations paid tribute to a devoted pastor and expressed prayerful wishes for God's continued blessing on his work in his new parish.

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CHAPTER VII
RECOVERY

For ten years without interruption, the Odessa district had been buffetted by drought and depression. Debt had also piled up on most farmers to an extent that not a few finally left their farms and sought new homes in cities or in other provinces. The fluctuation in population, as illustrated in the Appendix, best reflects the varying economic fortunes of these people. It also portrays the rise and fall in the financial position of the parish. An attitude of debt repudiation was gaining ground and was being deliberately cultivated by prophets of gloom.

Such was the dismal atmosphere in the community when the new pastor, Rev. Frank Gerein, arrived on January 1, 1939. This is perhaps best illustrated by the Parish Financial Statement for 1938 which was prepared with painstaking care by the new pastor with the assistance of Father Leibel and the trustees, Messrs. K. A. Righetti, Joseph Hoffart and Karl Tomascherski. This Statement revealed that the revenues for 1938 totalled only $1,309.74, and the liabilities of the parish, by compounding interest and inadequate income during the latter years, had grown to $17,682.00. A number of outstanding coal, tax, candle and church goods accounts which were subsequently discovered boosted the parish debt to well over $19,000.

It is small wonder that the district was ailing spiritually and socially, for the economic evils had a paralyzing impact on all activity. The first concern of the new parish priest was therefore to check the growth of debt, and, if possible, to effect its reduction. His second, but no less urgent charge, as committed to him by the Archbishop on his appointment, was to inspire new confidence in the Faithful and to effect an optimistic recuperation both spiritually and socially.

REV. FRANK GEREIN, D.D.
Present Pastor

A definite change in the fortunes of both people and parish came in 1941 when an excellent crop and good prices began the process of a rapid transformation. During 1939 and 1940 the parish debt was reduced steadily but only slightly. Beginning with 1941 the parishioners rallied around their pastor and on Oct. 1, 1945, the entire parish debt was paid off.

Meantime, the basement church, built only for temporary use almost 15 years earlier, had greatly deteriorated. The roof had been repaired several times over the intervening years; the floor had rotted and broken through in many places; organ, stoves, much equipment was worn out or obsolete. All this had to be repaired or replaced. Velvet curtains as a background for the altar were provided by the pastor to make the sanctuary more attractive. Extensive repairs were also necessary at the rectory and a new cement basement floor was put down — all in 1940. When building their basement church, the Faithful had hoped to complete their new church in 2 or 3 years. Such hopes had long since vanished. It is astounding how these people, undismayed by the manifold trials, responded to the call of their pastor during these years of recovery!

But now, free of debt at last, a Building Fund with a view to completing the church, was immediately opened. By the end of 1945, this already stood at $2.650.00 and at the end of 1946, it had increased to $12,501.64. Such progress quickly revived hopes and stimulated the zeal of the parishioners and impelled them, almost without exception, to genuine sacrifice for their parish.

Vocations

This economic regeneration of the congregation also had spiritual and social effects which were happy. The Faith of the people, even when in the slough of despond, was profound and genuine. The best evidence of this is provided by the vocations to religious life and to the priesthood, which began to appear during and after the depression.

Nine girls from the parish entered the Community of the Ursuline Sisters at Vibank, most of them before the depression had come. They are: Rosalia Wild (Sister M. Bernadette, at present Superior of the Community); Mary Wild (Sister M. Josepha; Anna Wild. (Sister M. Rosa); Ottilia Carolina Righetti (Sister M. Ursula; Ludwiga Righetti (Sister M. Veronica); Maria Catherina Righetti (Sister M. Berchmana); Maria Kuffer (Sister M. Agnes, until recently Superior of the Community); Bertha Krauss (Sister M. Stanislai) and Loretta Vogt (Sister M. Ignatia.

Likewise, a number of young men, either from the parish of with close relatives here, were ordained to the priesthood. A brief record of these should be of interest.

Odessa's first priest, Rev. James P. Herman, O.M.I., who was born here on July 28. 1915 and lived here until 1929, was ordained at Battleford on June 21, 1939. He offered his First Solemn High Mass here on June 25, when Father Schorr who had baptised him, attended and preached. A reception was held at the rectory when the Sodality and the C.Y.C. as well as the Volksverein made presentations.

Less than a month later, on July 18, Rev. Fr. Wencestaus Sebastian, O.F.M., a child of Kendal parish, who also has numerous relatives here, also visited Odessa and sang one of his first High Masses and imparted his priestly blessing.

On June 29, 1941, Rev. Lawrence Schlosser, a new priest, native of Sedley, and cousin of Father Gerein, graciously sang a High Mass here and gave his blessing to the people.

A week later, on July 6, the Revered Joseph Erne, also newly ordained, a native of Germany, sang his First Solemn High Mass at Odessa. Father Gerein preached on the occasion. Having no relatives in Canada, Fr. Erne had made his home with Fr. Gerein during his Seminary years and was therefore well known and loved in the parish, Every effort was made to make this a memorable event and suitable presentations were made to the new priest. It was with profound grief that we learned of his early death at Estevan on Dec. 16, 1947.

A milestone in the history of the parish was the ordination at Odessa of our first native son, the Rev. George Vogt. On June 24, 1945 Archbishop Monahan conferred Holy Orders on Father Vogt who is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Vogt. The impressive ceremonies were explained by Rev. Fr. John Capistran. O.F.M., who is now a Bishop in Egypt. Other priests who attended were: Rev. Fr. Hyacinth, O.F.M., McGilvray, SJ., Divine, S.J., O'Rourke, S.J., Mitchell, S.J., Zimmerman, Schorr. Savoie and Bechard. An enormous congregation crowded the inside of the church and around the doors and windows outside.

As a tribute to the new priest and to Archbishop Monahan, dinner was served in the school hall by the Altar Society. A reception was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vogt in the afternoon, and Father Vogt gave his First Solemn Benediction that evening. Great assistance was given by seven seminarians who came from Regina to assist with the ceremonies.

The following Sunday, July 1, Father Vogt sang his First Solemn High Mass here, assisted by Rev. P. Schorr, Vibank, who had baptized the new priest, and by Fr. Gerein. Father Erne preached an appropriate sermon for the occasion, graciously replacing Father Sauner who had accepted the task, but who had died during the week.

Finally, mention should be made of Rev. Father John Gabel, O.F.M., who moved from Odessa to California in 1924, when his parents migrated thither. Father Gabel was ordained to the priesthood at Santa Barbara, California, in the Franciscan Order in 1942.

Nor should we overlook two other priestly vocations, that of Joseph Deutscher, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Deutscher, and Isidore Gorski, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Gorski, both of whom were born at Odessa, and hope to be ordained in the new Odessa church in this Jubilee Year, 1954.

Spiritual Renascence

But there were also other signs of a vigorous spiritual regeneration which effected the parishioners directly and individually.

A Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary was organized and a first reception held on Feb. 2, 1939, the new Sodality obtaining its Decree of Affiliation from Rome some months later. During the following years, the Children of Mary confined their activities almost exclusively to spiritual works, such as an annual Mothers' Day Spiritual Bouquet for the mothers of the parish, monthly communion, weekly Little Office of the B.V.M. etc. The Odessa group of Sodalists is never large because most of the girls, when leaving school, generally also leave the parish to

work in the city. But they have assisted the Altar Society in various capacities and at Bazaars and Sports Days. On rare occasions also they put on plays and concerts, outstanding among which was the operetta, "Snowhite and the Seven Dwarfs" on Dec. 17, 1944.

As already mentioned, the Apostleship of Prayer was revived and additional Promoters were invested. Henceforth, with English more commonly used in the parish, the Leaflets, Messengers, and other literature was provided in English.

These two organizations are exclusively spiritual. Other societies such as the Catholic Youth Crusade and the Altar Society, and more recently the Catholic Mens' Club, besides persuing spiritual, social and cultural ideals, have also been active year after year in making financial contributions to the parish from their manifold projects and activities.

Another event of considerable moment to the parish occurred on Dec. 12, 1939, when the SILVER JUBILEE of its foundation was solemnly observed. After a Solemn High Mass at which Fathers Schorr and Theunissen assisted, a banquet was held in the school. This was followed by an impressive program. The celebration concluded in the evening with two 2-Act Plays, in German and English respectively, prepared by Sister Teresita and Mr. John Eisler.

Mention should be made here of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in every family during his first pastoral visitation in 1939, when the new pastor consecrated every family in the parish solemnly to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, leaving an inscribed picture in every home. The blessing resulting from this was not long delayed as we shall see.

Other spiritual innovations of some moment in 1939 were; Nocturnal Adoration during the 40 Hours. This was so popular and well attended that it has been maintained ever since.

On April 2, the pastor also introduced a second Mass for Sundays and Holy Days. Henceforth, announcements and sermon were in English at the early Mass, and in German at the later High Mass. This practise was also well received and continues to the present day.

The death of His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, signalled a "Week of Mourning" in the parish and gave evidence of the profound attachment of our people to the Holy Father.

With the outbreak of World War II, an increasing number of Odessa young men volunteered for service. With their departure, the anxiety of those at home was unceasing. At the behest of the Archbishop, frequent Hours of Adoration and Days of Exposition were held to invoke God's protection upon our boys and to implore peace. The piety, the sincerity, the large numbers always attending — — these were evidence of deep Faith and Trust in God, significant testimony that men of Faith seek the solace of the Church amid the tribulations of hard and anxious days.

Necrology

If the cooperation of his parishioners was often touching, their sympathy when sorrow came to their pastor was even moreso. The year 1942 was a sombre one for Father Gerein, for on March 18 his father, Anton F. Gerein, died at his rectory. His Grace, Archbishop Monahan together with Right Rev. Monsignor A.J. Janssen, V.G., and Father Schorr came to attend the obsequies two days later.

The Archbishop graciously preached on the occasion and gave the absolution. Father Gerein sang the Solemn Requiem Mass with Monsignor Janssen and Father Schorr assisting. Monsignor Janssen said the prayers of committal at the cemetry.

This year also brought the parish its first casualties of the war. Mr. Adam J. Gerein, brother of Father Gerein, was killed in active service in the air force overseas on July 12.

Mr. Frank X. Zacher, son of James Zacher, was also killed in England in an accident in the army on August 12.

Mr. Charlie Wild, son of Conrad Wild, was seriously injured in an airplane crash overseas in which all the other members of the crew lost their lives. Happily Charlie survived, though he sustained serious injuries.

June 1943 brought further tragedy to the parish. PO Johnny Schwab, formerly of the parish, had enlisted from here, and had gone unharmed through the heroic African campaign. Now he was killed in a plane crash in B. C. His remains were interred in Regina, but a Solemn Requiem and Memorial Service was conducted in our church for him.

It may be pertinent to add here that Mr. Karl Tomaschefski presented the parish with Title to a plot of land, about 8 acres, and also to the roadway leading thereto, which he had donated to the parish, in the hills northeast of the church in the pious hope that we would eventually erect a Calvary and shrine thereon. For the present, he bought and erected a Memorial Cross on a dominating hill on this land, and with Fr. Gerein he affixed on its base a Memorial Tablet to the three parish boys who died in the war. On May 27, 1946, the first Rogation Day, a rogation procession made its way to the Wayside Cross and it was blessed, It is our pious practise since to make most of our rogation processions to it.

On June 25, 1945, the former pastor of Odessa, the Rev. Charles Sauner, D.D., died quite suddenly at Mutrie, whither he had gone from Windthorst, to assist at the 40 Hour devotion. His death cast deep gloom over Odessa, but extremely heavy rains made the roads utterly impassable, so that many of the Faithful who desired to attend the funeral at Windthorst on June 29 found it impossible. Father Gerein sang a Requiem High Mass in our own church that day and many paid their last tribute by attending.

Two other deaths in 1947 brought deep grief to the parish. The first was that of our beloved Archbishop, Most Rev. P. J. Monahan. D.D., on May 6. A large representation from Odessa attended his funeral services at Regina as well as the Holy Masses for him in our own church.

On Dec. 16, the death at Estevan of the Rev. Joseph Erne brought additional sorrow to the parish, for during his student years he had made his home at the Odessa Rectory and had said his First Mass here, where he was therefore well known. He was buried in a special plot in the Ursuline Sisters' Cemetry at Vibank on Dec. 19, and despite unfavourable weather, a host of Odessa people attended.

Moreover, the death of two neighboring pastors who were well and favourably known in the parish, must be recorded. On June 5, 1952, Archbishop O'Neill conducted funeral services at Kendal for Father Beechy, Kendal pastor, who had

tragically died of suffocation in a fire which partly destroyed the rectory there. Three months later, on Sept. 4, the former pastor of Kendal, Father Jeseph Reindl, who was retired at St. Boniface, Manitoba, also died. Fr. Gerein also arranged for his funeral at Kendal and cared for the parish from June till November when Father Gillot was appointed pastor there. Father Reindl was also buried by Archbishop O'Neill at Kendal.

Finally, the death of Felix Millius on Dec. 5, 1952 should be noted. Few Odessa men had contributed more to every phase of community work than did Felix, in his quiet and unostentatious way. His unexpected death following an operation shocked the parish and evoked universal sorrow. His loss to the parish and district will long be lamented.

Financial Progress

The spiritual growth of his people is the primary concern of a pastor. But this is generally inseparable from its material developement. Measured by this norm, the progress of the Holy Family Parish and the generosity of its parishioners after 1941 were truly unprecedented.

In 1944, a special Debt Fund collection was made by Messrs. K. A. Righetti, Adam Schaffer, Matt. Zacher, James Gerein and Adam Wild, yielding $2,002.00.

Two years later, during the week of Oct. 13, 1946, a Building Fund Drive was conducted by the following 15 men: Karl Tomaschefski, Adam Schaffer, C. F. Runge, John Frasz, Peter Schneider, Steve Hoffart, James Gerein, John Klein, Adam Klein, A. F. Seiferling, Arthur Hoffman, Syl. Vogt, Lawrence Baumgartner, Frank Herauf and William Ortman. As the weather was inclement, cold, wet, these men went to great trouble, even going by horseback, to solicit donations. They collected $5,401 of the total of $9,851.64 which was added to the Building Fund this one year.

Prospects that we would soon be able to start work on our new church now became steadily brighter. Accordingly, two committees were set up in January 1948 which helped to make this a most remarkable year.

A Church Building Committee (elected for 2 years) was made up of Messrs. Chris Frass, C. F. Runge, Frank Herauf, Peter Schneider and A.F. Seiferling; A. G. Vogt replaced C. F. Runge when the latter moved away from the parish. The Hall Building Committee comprised Messrs, A.F. Seiferling, C.F. Runge, John J. Gerein, Felix Kraft and Frank J. Wild. These committees functioned as a Joint Committee and first obtained a rough sketch plan of our projected church as well as decided the final plan for the Hall and cooperated in a drive for funds (May 1948) and in the building of the Hall.

The immediate post-war years were also notable by the fact that several appeals for financial help and for charity, approved and recommended by the Archbishop, met with a generous response. For instance, a War Victim collection in 1945 yielded $107.25. In 1946, a collection for the starving children of Europe raised $303.00 and another for the War Victims brought $302.00. A drive for the Catholic Orphanages of the province sponsored by the Knights of Columbus raised $180.25 in addition to some $40.00 from the sale of shamrocks. Used clothing for Europe's destitute was collected in October 1945. More than 1000 pounds of clothing was handled by Mr. John M. Leboldus through the Post Office.

Similar appeals in subsequent years always touched warm hearts and evoked generous alms. For example, in 1947, the appeal for St. Patrick's Orphanage at Prince Albert, (recently burned down), yielded $401.70 - a committee of 12 men handling this drive. A collection for the starving children of Europe raised $286.76; for the Holy Father's charities, and, for the Cardinal Fring Fund netted $186.00 each.

Considerable major repair work, at considerable cost for materials, was done by volunteers in September, 1948 on the church roof and floor. An Iron Fireman Stoker was installed in the rectory at a cost of $279.00 with a view to saving coal and reducing overhead.

A study of the Appendix to this sketch will illustrate better than mere words can, how generously the Faithful rallied to support parish activities such as bazaars, parish suppers and picnics. Even the school children and the Children of Mary contributed their mite in the hope that the new church would not be too long deferred. The figures there given also emphatically testify to the generosity and loyalty to the Church on the part of the people of Odessa. But even these figures do not tell the full story. The vast amount of work and time needed to twice redecorate and paint the rectory and to paint the new Hall, and, to periodically repair and redecorate our basement church — all offered voluntarily and without pay — this reveals even more eloquently the deep Faith, generous hearts and pride in their church of the Odessa people.

Special mention should also be made of the trustees who served so selflessly during these last 15 years of unprecedented progress. They were: Sebastian Frass, Karl A. Righetti, Peter Schneider, Adam Wild, Adam Schaffer, Matt. Zacher, Vincent Vogt, and Frank Herauf. It was their consistent sound judgement and active interest in the progress of the parish which prompted them to attend numberless meetings, to sacrifice much time, travel at their own cost within the parish and beyond, and to provide leadership in every parish venture and activity — and always without the slightest cost to the parish.

Altar Society

A similar tribute is due to our Altar Society. While it is impossible to mention all the ladies by name in this brief sketch, we cannot forego to list the presidents who held office during this period. They were: Mrs. Lukas Vogt, Mrs. J.P. Frasz, Mrs. Frank Zerr, Mrs. Peter Schneider, Mrs. Karl Tomaschefski, Mrs. Simon Wasser, and Mrs. Anton Roth. In fact, every member deserves mention, for these ladies accomplished the impossible for their church during these years.

They washed the church linens; they helped to decorate and paint and clean whenever they were asked. Tirelessly and ingeniously they raised funds for new vestments, altar boy cassocks and surplices, flowers and other articles needed in the church. They were able to contribute over $1,100.00 towards building the Hall and well over $1,000.00 to our old debt fund. They organized parish suppers, served lunches and dinners at picnics, auction sales and bazaars. They contributed $3,900.00 to the new Church Building Fund and helped pay for the furnaces and repairs which were made at different times. They acquired all necessary dishes and kitchen equipment for suppers and social events. In a word, the services to the parish of these dedicated members of the Altar Society are so numerous that mere words are inadequate to ennumerate their merits or to express the gratitude of the parish.

Family Rosary Crusade

An event of unusual importance was the Family Rosary Crusade in October 1948. This was a province-wide venture, sponsored by the hierarchy, directed by the noted Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C., and guided by Father J. C. Keohan. The paper, THE TIME, went into every home. The Odessa Parish Committee of some 40 men, under Messrs. K. A. Righetti and Arthur Hoffman, directed the Crusade in the parish to a glorious success. The Giant Rally at Regina on Oct. 17 attracted more than half of the parish who joined in the motorcade to the city. The dinner for the Parish Committee was addressed by Mr. R. J. Deutscher who made a stirring appeal for the Family Rosary. The response in the parish was splendid. Mr. E. V. Dobson, Auditor of the Committee, reported that 177 families (including widows and bachelors) and 547 individuals signed the Family Rosary Pledge. It might be noted that a few signed pledges came in later. Only 22 individuals refused to sign. Fully 96 percent of all parishioners pledged themselves to the daily recitation of the Family Rosary, and each year since, as a reminder of their pledge, they are asked to renew it on the Feast of the Holy Rosary.

Volksverein

For 25 years, from 1914 to 1939, the parish had a remarkably active Catholic Mens' Club in the Volksverein. However, when World War II broke out, and in recognition of the fact that our younger men no longer spoke adequate German, the Executive of the Volksverein met with Father Gerein on Jan. 22, 1940 and decided to suspend activities and dissolve. It should be acknowledged however that for 25 years this Mens' Society had rendered invaluable social, cultural, educational, religious and even material services to the community and to the parish.

Catholic Youth Crusade

About the same time, the CYC was also disbanded, partly because almost all its members had gone into military service, and partly because of the emphasis some members placed on dances, and their want of interest in the other cultural aims of the C Y C.

After the war, our newly organized Catholic Mens' Club launched a weekly Open House entertainment at the Hall for the young people of the parish, beginning Dec. 30, 1948. For two years this venture provided notable recreational and educational services to the youth of the community.

But when the new Curling Rink was opened in 1950, interest in these weekly activities diminished both among the young people and among their sponsors. The community is neither large enough nor populous enough to disperse its forces. It was therefore decided to suspend these gatherings until a bigger need for them becomes manifest.

Odessa Catholic Mens' Club

By 1948 most of our young men were back from the war. The need for a community organization for the men was obvious, and to do effective work for both the parish and the community, it had to be organized on a basis somewhat different from that of the former Volksverein.

After much discussion and consultation, a meeting of the men of the parish was held in the new Hall on Oct. 26, 1948, with a view to the organization of a Catholic Mens' Club. Speakers were Messrs. Syl. Kramer and Phil. Rigelhof of Regina and Mr. R. J. Deutscher and Father Gerein of Odessa. A very promising and active club was organized with Frank Herauf as President and John J. Gerein as Secretary-treasurer, together with three Vice-presidents, viz., E. V. Dobson, Conrad Leurer and Gerald Frass. As its objective, it undertook to provide worthwhile spiritual, cultural, social and educational activities and to cooperate in raising funds for the Church and other deserving causes. Since that time, these objectives have been consistently pursued and innumerable services have been rendered to the parish and the community under the successive presidents, viz., Frank Herauf, Leo J. Gerein, George Kress, John J. Gerein and John Eisler.

Thus, the Club has been largely responsible for the success of our bazaars and Sports Days. It sponsored a number of projects for the general welfare of the community, e. g., a Carnival for the Curling Rink, a Collection for Ben Schneider of Wolseley who had lost his home and two only children in a fire, a public meeting with qualified speakers on the Foot and Mouth disease in cattle, and another to promote the work of the Red Cross, etc., Twice, on Nov. 6. 1948, and again on Oct. 13, 1951, the Club sponsored eminently successful Anti-TB Amateur Programs for the United Commercial Travellers in conjunction with Radio Station CKRM. They netted well over $1,900.00 at the first, and nearly that amount at the second.

Notable as was all this work, the outstanding achievement of the Club so far was the Building Fund Campaign which was organized in October, 1952. More will be said about this in the next chapter. And finally, the latest project of the Club was to provide a new Hammond Electric Organ for the new church — a project which is already near completion.

It brought many outstanding speakers to address and instruct its members on a variety of pertinent civic and religious subjects — speakers such as His Excellency, Archbishop M. C. O'Neill, D.D., Dr. J. M. Riffel. Fathers George Vogt, F. J. Schachtel, and Thomas More, O.F.M., as well as Messrs. A. B. Gerein, now District Court Judge at Humboldt, Syl. Kramer, P. S. Deis, G. J. Fahlman, John Leboldus of Vibank, etc.

Missions

A brief report on the Parish Missions which have been held at Odessa over the years should be appended here. Father Joseph Laufer, O.M.I. preached two missions at Odessa before it became an organized parish. Rev. Paul Hilland, O.M.I., who, by the way died at Winnipeg on Feb. 5, 1954, also preached one during that early period.

In 1920, Rev. Father Boniface, O.F.M., preached a mission at Odessa and erected a Mission Cross in the church. Rev. Father Theophile, O.F. Cap., preached another in 1927. And still another was directed by Rev. Fr. Charles, O.F.M., in 1934. Mention should be made also of a Triduum which was preached by Father Philip Funke, O.M.I., during Father Schorr's incumbency. Other missionaries who preached here during Father Schorr's time were Fathers Joseph Blank, S.J. and Carlin, S.J., and Jacob Wilhelm.

In more recent years, Parish Missions were given at Odessa by Father Paul Hilland, O.M.I., in 1939; Father Joseph Blank, S.J., of St. Louis Mo., in 1945;

Father Arnulf Hartman, O.S.A., an Augustinian Father from Vancouver, in 1949; and Father Gabriel Ehman, C.SS.R., Vice-provincial of the Redemptorist Fathers from Edmonton in 1952.

It may be remarked that the parishioners of the Holy Family Parish have always regarded Mission Week as a time of spiritual regeneration. Their attendance and fervour were always exemplary.

Catholic Press

The Faithful of Odessa have never been permitted to forget the importance of the Catholic Press. The Volksverein in the early days saw to it that such noted Press Apostles as Father Kierdorff, O.M.I. and Mr. Bernard Bott brought the Church's message to the members. Hence it was that practically every Catholic family, notwithstanding their poverty, subscribed to the "St. Petersbote" or to the "West Kanada" in their native German language. As the years went on, the younger people did not read German to a great extent, and support for these papers languished until finally both suspended publication.

When the present pastor came to Odessa, he found a woeful apathy towards the Catholic press, aggravated undoubtedly by the general desititution induced by the depression. Less than 10 families were receiving a Catholic paper at the time. By bringing in as speakers such advocates of Catholic journalism as Father H. Krawitz, O.M.I., he sought to revive in the Faithful a consciousness of their duty to the Catholic Press. As a result there has been a steady increase in the number of subscribers to the Prairie Messenger and to the Northwest Review.

In 1948, when the ENSIGN was launched, he placed the entire parish on its mailing list for 2 years. Since that time, about half the parishioners have, of their own initiative, maintained their subscriptions to either the Prairie Messenger or the Ensign.

Other Noteworthy Events

Before closing this chapter, a few other items deserve mention. Thus, on June 2, 1946 and again in 1950, the Wheat Pool held its district convention here, and the Altar Society served both dinner and supper to the delegates on both occasions.

On Oct. 7, 1945, the parish lost the services of Mrs. J. P. Schroeder who had directed the Church Choir for 27 years. A Farewell Party in the school paid touching tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Schroeder who retired from business and settled at St. Paul, Minn.

Perhaps the most impressive recent event was the Coronation Celebration held on May 31, 1953. Speakers were Messrs. W. H. Wahl, M.L.A., and H. O. Derby, B.Ed., School Superintendent.

It is also worth noting that during 1947, the pastor undertook to prepare applications for the admission to Canada of a considerable number of Displaced Persons in Europe — relatives of people who reside at Odessa and its neighboring communities. By 1948 several of these refugees had arrived and more applications were constantly being requested.

By the end of 1946, following 5 exceptionally good crops, the district had recovered completely from the effects of the depression. Several new homes were built on the lots which had been subdivided for the parish. Practically all farmers now owned their land and few renters remained in the parish. The Faithful now contributed to the church with unprecedented generosity so that their hopes for a new church began to revive.

CHAPTER IX

CONSTRUCTION

By the end of 1948 our Church Building Fund stood at $24,000.00 and definite plans had to be formulated and preliminary preparations were necessary. The school had been entirely renovated and redecorated and was no longer available for community and social affairs. No room or hall large enough to accomodate the Faithful for Mass and other Divine Services existed in the village. Hence some provision had to be made in anticipation of our church building project.

As stated in the last chapter, the parish accordingly decided in January 1948 to set up commitees to devise means and to prepare plans for a Parish Hall as well as a Church. It was felt that the Hall should be built without delay so that it might provide facilities for parish suppers, bazaars, concerts, Talkies, public meetings, etc., since no place now existed in the village for such endeavours. Moreover, a Parish Hall has become indispensible in a modern parish which is conscious of its social obligations. It is interesting to note that over the following 5 years, well over $15,000.00 was raised through these diverse social activities for our Church Building Fund — so we may well conclude that the Hall helped to bring the new church closer.

Moreover, the Parish Hall offered ideal facilities for a temporary church during 1953 while the new church was under construction. Besides, it was to serve as a community centre for athletic and recreational purposes and also provide our students with a stage for plays and public speaking. To the village also, it offered a service, in as much as it attracted wedding celebrations, public meetings, etc., all of which made Odessa a more attractive business centre.

Parish Hall

Plans for the Hall were evolved and developed by the Hall Building Committee; construction was directed and supervized by Adam Wild and Peter Schneider who

HOLY FAMILY CHURCH
Odessa, Saskatchewan

gave unselfishly of time and toil; the Hall front was designed by Bennie Wild. Construction was begun on June 1, 1948, and the Hall was ready for use on June 30, though the interior was left unfinished until December when the people had more time to devote to it. All labour was generously donated and the Hall, when completed, was almost completely free of debt.

At a General Parish Meeting (July 28) a permanent Hall Committee was set up. Messrs. Peter Schneider, Arthur Hoffmann and Rudolph Kraft were elected, and Adam Wild representing the Church Trustees, together with the pastor, were designated to constitute the Hall Committee. Rudolph Kraft was appointed Hall Manager by this Committee and a schedule of Rental Fees and Rules and Regulations were drawn up, and the administration was placed entirely in the hands of the Manager, under the supervision and with the cooperation of the rest of the Hall Committee.

Others who have served on the Hall Committee during the past 5 years are: Adam Klein, Nick J. Schatz, S. Frass, Frank Herauf, Steve Hoffart, Frank J. Wild and George Kress. Under their administration the Hall has been well conducted and frequently used. While its revenues are never high, for it is not expected to make much money, it nonetheless offers facilities to the entire Odessa district which are essential. Five years of experience amply justifies the decision to build it.

New Parish Church Projected

But the chief aim and constant hope of the parish was to complete our parish church. Moreover, by 1948, the need had become urgent. Our basement church had so far deteriorated that an entire new oil-heating system had to be installed in 1950 at a cost of $1,500.00, and even then it could be heated only with difficulty and at considerable cost. The roof leaked in many places; the floor had rotted; the porches and steps had to repaired and replaced and other major repairs had become necessary. All these were deferred in the hope that we would soon be able to build the projected church.

During 1948 and 1949, our Church Building Committee, composed of Messrs. P. Schneider, A. G. Vogt, A. F. Seiferling, Frank Herauf and Rudolph Kraft together with the Church Trustees, did a great amount of work. Numerous meetings were held to study, modify, change and adapt sketches and plans and specifications for the new church. The Architects, Messrs. Van Egmond and Storey, called for tenders in April 1950, on the plans as finally approved. The only tender submitted was by the Poole Construction Company and called for a cost of $96,583,00. As we had less than $30,000.00 in our Building Fund at the time, it was felt that this would impose too heavy a debt on the parish, and a General Meeting on May 21, 1950, rejected the tender and decided to postpone building until we would have more money and costs would be lower.

Moreover, the year 1949 and 1950 brought a notable decline in the number of parishioners and also in parish revenues. In 1949 drought was so acute that most farmers harvested little crop. The following year gave promise of an excellent crop, but a plague of grasshoppers and a very early frost ruined the grade and greatly reduced the yield. Where at the beginning of 1949 the parish reached its peak with 154 families counting 723 souls, by the end of 1950 these had decreased to

131 families with only 673 souls. One family had moved to Eastern Canada, six to Regina and five to other parishes in 1950.

This year also marked the erection of a mission church at Francis to which 12 families on the south extremity of the parish were transferred. Mass was said for the first time in the new Francis church by the Rev. George Vogt of Sedley on Dec. 24, 1950.

After the decision not to proceed with the new church for the time being, a great deal of work had to be done to rehabilitate our church basement. It was cleaned, painted and repaired. A cement foundation for the new furnaces was put down. A large number of parishioners helped with this work. The cemetry chapel was also painted, the cemetry cleaned and fixed up as in previous years.

Final Preparations

Excessive rain and snow during the 1951 thrashing season rendered an otherwise bountiful and excellent crop so damp and tough that it was difficult to store or to sell, although little of it actually spoiled. As a result, for three years no campaign for the Building Fund was undertaken, because the parish did not wish to unduly burden the Faithful.

However, the 1952 crop was the best in the history of the district — yield, grade, price and harvesting conditions were ideal, so that the whole parish seemed fired with the determination that "if we can't build our church out of this crop, we will never build it."

When therefore the 1952 crop seemed exceptionally promising, the Trustees invited the Odessa Catholic Mens' Club to organize a Building Fund Drive. Thirty men volunteered to canvas the parish and the Pastor held several Briefing Meetings with these men and prepared literature and pledge forms. During the last week of October this group of men, following an explanation of the campaign in the the Church by the Pastor, visited every family and met with a most cordial reception. They collected $5,577.60 in cash as well as pledges totalling $13,162.75 and 1,012 days of free labor, 400 bushels of wheat, and the proceeds from 110 acres of the 1953 crop — a grand total of well over $19,000.00 At the same time the parishioners expressed themselves 100 percent in favor of building in 1953.

In view of this unanimity and generosity, the Church Building Committee authorized Father Gerein to solicit the approval of Archbishop O'Neill. On Nov. 10 the Archbishop gave his consent to the project, whereupon S. Frass and R. F. Deutscher accompanied the pastor to a meeting with the Architects who were on this occasion instructed to complete definite plans and specifications. Two representatives of the Architects, Messrs. Marvin and Williams visited the present basement and thoroughly examined it before they undertook the developement of the plans. Some 20 men hauled over 100 yards of gravel to the grounds on Nov. 14-16, lest soft roads in the spring would delay the project.

Materials and Contracts

The plans being ready and preliminary arrangements completed, the Building Committee decided on Jan. 15, 1953, to proceed with the project under the supervision of Mr. R. F. Deutscher and Father Gerein, who, with S. Frass and Peter Schneider, were authorized to order materials, to call tenders for subcontracts, and to rent necessary equipment.

After interviewing various building material dealers, the Odessa Cooperative Association and Anton J. Kleckner both offered to supply all materials at whole-

sale cost. It was deemed proper that since the entire community was contributing both cash and labour and no individual was deriving any profit, the dealers who are members of the parish would forego all profits and commissions as an additional contribution. Cement was in short supply, so Mr. Kleckner went to Winnipeg to arrange for ample.

Price quotations were submitted to the Building Committee on Feb. 20, and the following materials were ordered for immediate delivery:

Through A. J. Kleckner: 5 carloads of Redcliffe Brick and three of tile; one carload of American and one of Canadian cement. (Later in the summer, another carload of Canadian cement was supplied by Mr. Kleckner and an additional carload of American cement by the Odessa Coop.) One carload of shiplap lumber: nails, bolts, and hardware. The Millwork was ordered from the Western Manufacturing Co., also through Mr. Kleckner, as well as almost two carloads of rockwool insulation and a carload of asphalt shingles. A great deal of other material was obtained through him during the course of construction.

Through the Odessa Coop we ordered two carloads of Lime, Plaster, Gold Dust and Gypsum Lath as well as two carloads of heavy dimensional lumber. Through the cooperation of the Saskatchewan Federated Cooperatives Ltd., a variety of materials in short supply were also obtained in the course of construction.

The following tenders were also accepted at a series of meetings in February and March: 1984 glass blocks and ventilators from Hobbs Glass for $2,774,77; Reinforcing steel (about 27 tons) from Cowin and Co., Winnipeg, for $3,434,00; Structural steel (about 5 tons) from the Manitoba Bridge and Engineering Works Ltd., for $2,214,00; Electrical Wiring from Hube Electric Co., for $2,762.00; Brick and tile work from John Weigl for $6,600.00; Steam Heating installation from the Acme Plumbing Shop for $10,565.00 which was subsequently increased by $448.00 through certain changes and improvements; From R. J. Fyffe Equipment Ltd., we rented an Air Compressor, Cement Mixer, and bought cement drills etc., at a total cost of $700.00.

Later in the year, when the church was already well advanced, additional subcontracts were awarded to: Blondin Roofing Services Ltd., for $2,384.00; Antonini and Sons for a 1-8" rubber tile floor for $4,850.00; (This price was reduced later when it was decided to use a lighter rubber tile in part of the church.) Antil and Kutcher of Moose Jaw were awarded the plastering tender for $3,500.00.

Father Gerein also contacted the Workmen's Compensation Board to assure adequate protection for all workers on the project, as well as the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the Income Tax Office for directions in the matter of deductions from our pay roll.

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The Building Committee authorized Messrs. Deutscher and Righetti to hire a crew of local skilled carpenters who would work till the church is finished and they set a reasonable rate at which all voluntary labour and services and equipment rental by parishioners would be compensated in the form of credits to the new church building.

Work is Started

On April 9 work was commenced. Thirty and sometimes 40 men came to dig, remove the roof from the old basement, prepare forms and reinforcing steel, and to break down cement walls where changes in the foundation were necessary. An exemplary enthusiasm and good will prevailed, and it is proper to note that, despite slight set-backs now and then, this gratifying spirit of cooperation continued until the church was finished.

The weather in the early summer retarded the work seriously and also made it impossible for some to keep their pledges of labour. As a result a somewhat bigger crew than we had anticipated had to be hired and this resulted in higher wage costs than we had estimated. But the work proceeded at a remarkably rapid and steady pace with relatively few interruptions. Some 500 yards of gravel were hauled; additional tile and brick, cement and lime were needed — and whenever a call for volunteers for this or for any other purpose was issued, a hearty response was invariably given.

Hence the new church was so far advanced by December that plans were made to move into it for Christmas. Here again the cooperation was inspiring. On week days, Holy Mass was offered at the convent through the courtesy of the Sisters, so that the finishing work could proceed on the church. But Mass was offered for the first time in the new church on Sunday, Dec. 20, 1953.

The Church Completed

At the time when this historical sketch is being written, some work remains to be done on the floor, the furnace, altars, and no painting has been done. However, it is hoped that all will be completed by March 25, 1954 — for on that day His Excellency, Archbishop M. C. O'Neill, D.D., is scheduled to bless and dedicate the new church.

The completed church will cost about $100,000.00 in addition to the voluntary services and labour provided by the parishioners. The following interim statement should therefore prove of interest.

CONGRATULATIONS

Hube Electric Company

1841 Cornwall St., REGINA, SASK.

for the best deal in town see:

McCLARY (Refrigerators) (Ranges) (Washers) for over 100 years and still the Best.

Revenue

Cash on hand, Jan. 1, 1953	$49,938.40
Cash donated during 1953	$20,352.49
LOAN from Odessa Credit Union	$15,000.00
Total cash available	$85,290.89
Voluntary labour by parishioners during 1953	$ 5,419.95
Voluncary truck, tractor, cartage etc. services	$ 2,312.25
Total donated services	$ 7,732.20

Disbursements

Cash paid out during 1953:	
Wages	$17,932.50
Freight	$ 3,296.62
Building materials	$34,971.77
Brick Contract	$ 6,600.00
Equipment rental	$ 844.40
Heating Contract	$ 6,957.15
Plaster Contract	$ 3,150.00
Roofing Contract	$ 2,284.00
Electrical Contract	$ 1,715.52
Insurance	$ 976.36
Architect	$ 1,500.00
Miscellaneous	$ 1,042.61
Total	$81,270.93
Accounts and contracts still unpaid (Estimated)	$15,500.00

On the basis of the above figures, the parish will have to borrow an additional $10,000.00 as the unfinished contracts and work progresses. Thus, when the church is entirely complete, the parish debt should not exceed $25,000.00.

The following list of materials used on the new church may be of interest: 2518 bags of cement; about 30 tons of steel; 1984 Glass Blocks; 1933 bags of plaster and lime; 93,040 bricks; 19,045 tiles; 372 bundles of shingles; 1500 square yards of metal lath; 76.544 board feet of lumber; over 3000 bolts; about 35 kegs of nails, etc.

New Equipment

As the new church neared completion, it was found that certain new equipment would be needed for which no provision had been made. Several parishioners volunteered to pay for these items.

The major item was a new Hammond Electric Organ. When this need was placed before the members of the Catholic Mens' Club, it assumed its purchase as its own and immediate project. A committee of four - John M. Leboldus, E.V. Dobson, Anton Herauf and John Eisler - was appointed to effect a canvas of the parish and to devise means of raising the necessary funds. It was installed for Christmas at a cost of $3,929.45, of which $2,200.00 had been paid off at that time.

Another article which had been badly needed for some time was a Vestment Case. In January, 1951, Peter Schneider together with Ben and Victor Wild undertook to build one which would also be suitable for the new church.

A new 42 foot Communion Rail appropriate for the new church was also needed. At a cost of $700.00 Mr. Anton J. Kleckner ordered the Western Manufacturing Company to build it as his donation. In 1947 he had also donated a complete set of 6 altar boys cassocks, lace surplices and capes.

Owing to the curving vault in the new church, new Stations of the Cross were also needed. These were purchased by the Righetti family as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. K. A. Righetti on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary (Jan. 17, 1954). His Excellency, Archbishop M. C. O'Neill graciously came to Odessa on this occasion to bless the new stations.

Other new church equipment was paid for by the following: Baptismal Font, donated by Adam Schaffer; Sanctuary Lamp, donated by Peter Schneider; Altar Cards and 2 small and one large Holy Water Fonts, donated by J. M. Righetti; Sacristy Cabinet, donated by Frank Herauf; Holy Water Font, donated by Anton Herauf; Holy Water Dispenser, donated by A. F. Seiferling; Lace for Communion Rail cloth, donated by a group of ladies; New Altar Boy Cassocks, Surplices, Communion Rail Cloths, and Altar Linens, as well as additional dishes and cutlery for the new Auditorium, were pledged by the Altar Society.

A few other items, such as carpets, will also be secured to embellish the church and the services, and these too will be provided by other donors as soon as the need is known.

Other Events of Note

Before ending this chapter, a few other noteworthy events and innovations introduced before 1954 merit mention.

Owing to the illness of Archbishop Monahan in 1947, Archbishop Gerald Murray of Winnipeg came to Odessa to administer Confirmation to a class of 42 children on July 21.

But the happiest event in recent years was the appointment on Dec. 7, 1947, of a new Archbishop for Regina in the person of the Most Rev. Michael Cornelius O'Neill, D.D., of Edmonton. Father Gerein attended his consecration at Edmonton on April 14, 1948 as well as his installation at Regina on April 21. Unfortunately roads and weather were very bad and kept many of the Odessa Faithful from attending. His encouragement to the parish during the last 5 eventful years, and especially his pastoral visits for Confirmation in 1950 and 1953, were a constant source of inspiration to both pastor and Faithful. May he find consolation and reward in the benediction which he will impart to the church and to a grateful parish when he dedicates the new church on March 25, 1954.

On New Years Eve of both 1950 and 1951, a midnight service of a Holy Hour of Reparation closed the old year and a High Mass opened the New Year. We were happy to avail ourselves of this special permission which the Holy Father had accorded.

The Family Rosary Pledge was renewed annually at each Mass ever since the Family Rosary Crusade. At this renewal, emulating the example of the Holy Father, the parish consecrated itself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Memorable

too was the "Living Rosary" which was persented in the church for the first time by the School Children on Oct. 30, 1949.

Recognizing the need for a more thorough religious knowledge among our people, and obedient to the wishes of the Archbishop, the teachers and trustees of the parish met at the rectory on Oct. 13, 1950, for the purpose of organizing a Unit of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Cold weather restricted the attendance, but a small interim organization was set up. On Nov. 17, Rev. Father Wadey held a Rally at Vibank which was also poorly attended due to storm and cold. However, considerable progress was made during the following years, and we cherish fond hopes for the future.

On August 3, 1953, Archbishop O'Neill blessed the new St. Francis Church which had been built at Francis under the direction of Father George Vogt of Sedley. A dozen former Odessa families belong to the new mission and the Faithful of Odessa joined them on this historic occasion to share their joy and to encourage them in their efforts te develope the new mission.

On Sunday, May 20, 1951, the first parish Catechetical Day was held at Odessa. Father Wadey of the Cathedral staff was here and preached at the Masses as well as at the public meeting in the evening. At this Rally about 100 members were enrolled in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Mr. John Eisler was appointed president; Anton Herauf, vice-president, and Conrad Leurer, secretary. On August 12 an Autumn Meeting was held. For the children, the Messenger series of the catechism was adopted and all teachers and parents cooperated so that all children of the parish now receive and use it.

An innovation during Holy Week seemed to meet with universal approval. On Good Friday, 1952, for the first time, the "Tre Ore" services were conducted from 12 to 3 p.m. And on Holy Saturday the New Vigil Service from 10 to midnight was introduced with an excellent attendance at the exercises and at Holy Communion. The new mitigated Fast and Abstinence regulations were also proclaimed at the beginning of Lent. Likewise, in January, 1953, the new rules for the Eucharistic Fast were published.

Finally, the event of greatest significance for the Faithful of Odessa, the event which evoked universal joy and acclaim, was the news on March 2, 1952, that the Most Rev. Frank Klein, pastor of Quinton, well known in this parish and related to several parishioners, had been appointed Bishop of Saskatoon. He was consecrated at Regina on April 30 by Cardinal McGuigan in the most elaborate solemnities in the history of the archdiocese. A very large contingent of Odessa parishioners attended the memorable consecration ceremonies as well as the first Pontifical High Mass of Bishop Klein at Sedley and at Francis. Many too travelled to Saskatoon to witness his solemn installation there a week later. Our universal wish and prayer accompanies him: that God bless and prosper his labours in his new and more responsible and burdensome cure as Bishop of Saskatoon.

CHAPTER X

EDUCATION

In a community so proliferous from its earliest days, the need for schools was urgent. It was inevitable therefore, that these people who had left Europe in the hope of improving their lot and of providing a more promising future for their children, should be thinking of organizing school districts and providing education opportunities for their youth.

As early as 1904, two school districts were organized in this community. The first school was named SIBEL PLAINS SCHOOL and had as its first trustees Messrs. Alex Seibel, George Runge and Konrad Herbach. This school was located about 2 miles southeast of the present village, and for several years served as a centre where Holy Mass was provided periodically. The first teacher who remained until 1905 was a non-Catholic, Mr. John Lane.

It is interesting to study the school building costs of those early days. On May 18, 1904, the Trustees of this school approved a resolution to borrow $800.00 for the building of a frame school, 24 feet by 30 feet. It is likewise of interest that in 1908, the Trustees hired Mr. A. G.. March as teacher at the munificent salary of $720.00 for the year.

Also in 1904, another school, ST. STEPHEN'S, was organized southwest of the present village, with Messrs. Michael Stengel, Frank Runge and Mr. Jones as first trustees. Mr. Stengel also served as secretary. During the winter of 1905-06, Holy Mass was offered several times in this centre by Rev. Father Van de Velde. The first Catholic teacher engaged for this school was Francis O'Connor in 1909.

Two more school districts were organized in 1905, viz., ST. GEORGE, north east of Odessa, and ST. WENDLIN, west of the village. The first trustees at St. George were Messrs. Joseph Schaefer, Lukas Vogt and Franz Kohlruss; the first teacher in this school was also a non-Catholic, Charlie Booth. The first trustees at St.

ODESSA VILLAGE SCHOOL

Wendelin were Joseph Vogt, John Schatz and Joseph Hoffart, with Joseph Vogt serving as secretary.

It is interesting to recall that in 1914 the frame school building of Sibel Plains was sold for $50.00 to Anselm Rothecker, and again $800.00 was borrowed for the building of a new school at its present site, where two acres of land had been purchased from John Rist. Two years later a teacherage was added and for this purpose $400.00 was borrowed.

The Odessa Village School district was not erected until 1911. It was designed to serve the village and immediate vicinity of Odessa. To erect this district, the various rural schools had to reliquish some of their land and accept a reduction in their size. The first trustees of the Odessa School were Messrs. Wendel Wagman, Frank Heintz and Neil Moser. The same year the first village school was built.

During more than 40 years, the Odessa Village School has been fortunate in always having had an exceptionally capable and dedicated staff of teachers. Outstanding among the principals who have administered this school were three:

1. J. P. Miller, B.A., B. Ed., who was appointed in 1919 and remained until his appointment as a School Inspector in 1928. He is at present Superintendent of the Regina Separate Schools. It was during his tenure at Odessa that High School classes were introduced here.

2. Michael Daly, who succeeded Mr. Miller, remained for only two years, when he joined the Regina Separate school staff.

3. John Eisler became principal here in 1931 and has been in charge ever since. During his tenure, while the number of students has fluctuated, the standard of education has kept well abreast with every improvement, and the full High School course was introduced. As will be seen later, this school under his guidance for ever 20 years, has achieved gratifying results.

In 1920 the Reverend Ursuline Sisters were invited to teach in the Odessa School, and as an inducement to them, a house was purchased for them from Christian Klein and clear Title thereto was given to the Sisters in 1927. These Sisters have rendered invaluable services to the parish over the years, always silently and unostentatiously. Their sense of the artistic and of refinement, their interest in culture and music are constantly in evidence in both school and church.

Three other schools merit mention here, though strictly they do not belong to the parish of Odessa. However, a number of Odessa children attend there. These schools are: NIDERLAND SCHOOL which belongs to Vibank. This school, organized in 1907 under the name of Cloverdale School, changed its name to Niderland in 1912. PLEASANT VIEW SCHOOL now belongs to the mission of Francis. INTERLAKE SCHOOL is closer to Odessa than to Indian Head, but its pupils belong almost exclusively to to the Parish of Indian Head.

Religious Instruction

From the earliest days, the trustees of these schools sought to provide religious instruction and therefore made every effort to get Catholic teachers. That they were successful in their quest is best attested by the following tributes, written by successive Archbishops, following their pastoral visitations.

On June 29, 1919, Archbishop Mathieu wrote: (translated from French) "What joy to visit a parish like this! Peace, union, concord reign here among the faithful who surround their excellent pastor with respect and affection. An excellent spirit animates them. They showed their faith and piety this morning by approaching the Holy Table. May this beautiful state of affairs persist. God will then continue to shed His most precious favours on these good people whom He should love.

"The church is already too small. . ."

On Aug. 16, 1923, Archbishop Mathieu wrote: "Another day full of consolation. The same good spirit prevails in the parish."

On Sept. 4, 1932, Archbishop McGuigan wrote. "we are pleased with our visit and note as worthy of commendation:

1. The great number of Holy Communions;
2. The religious instruction of the children;
3. The spirit of faith shown in the reception of their chief pastor;
4. The fact that, despite depressed revenues, their debentures have been met."

On Nov. 17, 1935, Archbishop Monahan wrote: "All through the day we admired the beautiful religious spirit of the people and the children. It is a pleasure to see such fine groups of Catholic families with their Catholic schools and the assistance of good Sisters. God bless Pastor, Sisters, People and Children."

On Aug. 6, 1950, Archbishop O'Neill wrote: "The children were well instructed. After Confirmation, we congratulated the children and parents and exhorted the latter:

1. to give good example and encouragement to their children:
2. to further their religious instruction;
3. to make their homes, homes of prayer and the Family Rosary."

Again, when Archbishop McGuigan introduced Diocesan Catechetical examinations in 1931, most of the Odessa children wrote the exams and gave an excellent account of themselves. Their religious instruction had been neither superficial nor haphazard.

Such tribute redounds to the credit of those early trustees who took their responsibilities seriously in matters educational. As early as 1916 the Sibel Plains School Board deputed Mr. K. A. Righetti to attend the School Trustees convention at Regina and the following year the entire Board attended. The same can be said of the trustees of all these schools, even though they were handicapped with an imperfect knowledge of English. Their interest in and zeal for education however was communicated to their neighbours and thus a lively interest in the welfare and developement of the schools was maintained.

Likewise, when the Religious Vacation School movement was inaugurated in the archdiocese, the Odessa children immediately joined in it. Ever since, every summer for two weeks they come to town, even though they studied catechism all year, and under the direction of the Ursuline Sisters, they build more firmly on the foundations which a daily half hour had laid during the year. These summer sessions have also proved an ideal preparation for the successive Confirmation classes.

Cultural

All these schools have also striven to bring more culture and the finer arts to their pupils. Hence, at least at Christmas, and often more frequently, they

put on musical and dramatic programs. Now and then, they even prepared and presented plays. For instance, the Niderland School presented a very successful play for the benefit of the parish in 1935.

The Odessa Village School, however, always having had a far bigger enrollment and several teachers, was obviously able to do much more in this respect. Frequent plays, concerts, and a variety of programs were prepared every year. Once the Hall was built and better facilities provided, an added incentive was given to the children — and the entertainment they provided was always acclaimed by an excellent attendance and appreciative audience.

An unusual event occurred on May 9, 1948 when the Village School, sponsored by the Altar Society, put on an Industrial Arts Exhibit and served tea to the guests. Many people visited the refurbished school and viewed the exhibits of handicraft and woodwork prepared by the students.

To provide Audio-visual facilities, the Odessa School Board purchased a new projector in 1952. To make this possible, the parish supported a School Bazaar organized by the children and helped them clear $672.00, and also donated the old parish projector to the cause.

Graduation Exercises

On Sept. 14, 1941, Graduation Exercises were held in the village school for the first time. This year for the first time in the history of the parish, a class of Grade XII pupils was graduated. In previous years they had always left and made their Grade XII in other schools. Mr. Eisler always succeeded in gettng outstanding speakers for these exercises which henceforth became an annual event. Among the speakers in subsequent years were such noted educators as Rev. McGilvray, S.J., Rector of Campion College; Mr. Lewis, Inspector of Schools; and Mr. Hubert Staines, Minister of Education; Doctor Tait; Mr. Bernard White; Mr. J. P. Miller.

In 1949 a fourth room was opened. While attendance at rural schools has declined of late years, the enrollment in the village school is maintaining itself.

An Educational Milestone

In 1944 a strong movement for the establishment of Larger Units of School Administration was launched in the province. Catholics generally feared the movement as an implicit assault on Separate Schools and also because they viewed the Larger Units as a restriction on the parental rights in education. Any tendancy towards centralization was also feared as a move towards socialization and regimentation. Finally, coming so soon after the depression, the agitation for Larger Units aroused fears of spiraling education costs.

In view of such considerations, at Archbishop Monahan's behest, the Odessa pastor invited all the School Trustees, Catholic and non-Catholic, from Lajord and Balgonie in the West to Candiac and Wolseley in the East, to a special School Trustees meeting at Odessa on Dec. 27, 1944, for a thorough discussion and study of Larger Units. There were 97 trustees present, representing 44 school districts. Some 250 people packed the school hall where the meeting convened.

Since the Regina speakers who were scheduled to attend were unable to get here. Fr. Gerein had to speak and direct the discussion which was very lively and lasted 3 to 4 hours. At its close, almost unanimously, the trustees adopted, resolutions in opposition to the Larger Units and appointed a delegation, to he headed by Fr. Gerein, to interview Mr. Lloyd, the Minister of Education.

The result of that and subsequent interviews, was that, because of the Government's determination, the establishment of the Regina (East) School Unit could not be forestalled. However, every consideration was given to the wishes of the delegation and the boundaries of the new Larger Unit were entirely changed to meet some of our objections and to facilitate the administration of the Unit. The central office was established at Odessa, and Mr. J. P. Miller was appointed its first Superintendent. Under his tactful administration and a very harmonious Larger Unit Board, animosities cooled and most friction was soon eliminated.

While some of our original fears, such as steadly rising taxation, have been fully realized, others, which effect the essence of education, have happily since disappeared. For this, we owe thanks to the conciliatory attitude of the Department of Education, and most especially to Mr. Miller and to his successors as Superintendents of this Larger Unit — Messrs. R. J. Deutscher, B.A., B.Ed., and Orton Derby, B.A., B. Ed., present Superintendent.

After some 6 years as Superintendent of this Larger Unit, Mr. R. J. Deutscher was appointed to the staft of the Moose Jaw Teacher's College in 1951. He had been an active and wise counsellor in all community and parish activities while at Odessa. The parish is justly proud at the promotion of one of its own sons and his departure was keenly regretted. He was replaced at Odessa in September 1952 by Mr. Orton Derby who, though not a Catholic, has already given ample promise to continue the excellent work which Mr. Deutscher had initiated.

Catechetical Institutes

No record of the educational developement in this community would be complete without a reference to two Catechetical Institutes which were both held at the

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Vibank Convent, but organized largely through the cooperation of Mr. Deutscher and Mr. Derby.

The first was held on Nov. 12, 1948, and was in large measure successful because of the preliminary work done by Rev. M. Bernadette, O.S.U., and the Teachers' Association of the Larger Unit under the direction of Mr. Deutscher. Among the noted speakers on the program were His Excellency, Archbishop O'Neill, and the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, the Hon. Dr. J. M. Uhrich.

A second Teachers' Catechetical Institute was held on Oct. 20, 1952 with the very active and inspiring cooperation of Mr. Derby. Excellent papers were presented and Group Discussions featured. His Excellency Archbishop O'Neill again favoured the meeting with his presence and an inspiring closing address.

In comment we may remark that an encouraging interest in Religious Instruction was manifested. Practically every Catholic teacher in the Larger Unit, as well as a number of non-Catholics, attended.

Athletics

Although the intellectual, moral and religious training of their children has always been the paramount consideration of the parents at Odessa, their physical developement was by no means neglected.

From the days of Mr. Miller, the Odessa School has never been without a formidable baseball team. Other forms of sports too were cultivated, but baseball, and later softball, was always popular with the parents, and provided stimulating rivalry and competition at the annual Sports Days. In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on the winter sports of skating and hockey. And since the Curling Rink was built, this form of recreation is also being fostered.

In conclusion it may be remarked that the Larger School Unit has been helpful in this respect. It facilitated the holding of annual School Field Days on both a Sub-Unit and Unit basis: These are held annually and have a happy effect in bringing teachers and pupils from many otherwise isolated schools into friendly and competitive contact. Thanks to the conveniences which the Odessa parish Sports Grounds and Parish Hall provide, two of these School Unit Field Days have been held here, in 1949 and 1952 respectively.

Higher Education

While promoting higher education and providing improved facilities on a local level, the people of Odessa have also consistently given notable support to every movement for promotion of Catholic College and University education.

Thus, when Campion College was first established at Regina, every appeal and collection for its support was generously answered at Odessa. When Campion appealed for funds to make possible its extension in 1946, Odessa parish sponsored a campaign which raised $1,513.50 — the largest amount raised by any rural parish in that drive.

Likewise, when St. Thomas More College in the University of Saskatchewan sought the necessary means to build a new college in 1953, and even though Odessa was at the time raising funds for the construction of its own new church, the parish organized an intensive campaign and succeeded in gathering cash and pledges for St. Thomas More amounting to $2,430.00.

These figures are a token of the value which the people of Odessa place upon higher education. Less tangible perhaps, but far more enduring evidence of their appreciation of higher and professional education is provided in the appendix of this sketch. There are recorded the number of sons and daughters of these early immigrants who aspired to and found greater heights of knowledge by acquiring University degrees.

APPENDIX I

Parish Revenues

Year	Total Receipts	Bazaar Profits	Picnic Profits	Loans
1908	$ 3,774.05	$ ———	$ ———	$2,260.00
1912	———	———	243.05	
1913	425.70	———	———	———
1914	1,132.50	———	102.80	
1915	2,636.80	———	450.65	
1916	4,520.40	———	421.20	
1917	5,274.52	———	———	
1918	3,371.97	———	———	
1919	3,404.77	———	472.45	
1920	3,453.87	———	436.40	
1921	3,181.32	———	337.70	
1922	2,939.08	———	462.85	
1923	3,305.03	———	———	
1924	4,044.73	767.38	———	
1925	4,983.49	1,200.00	408.00	
1926	9,142.82	1,102.00	595.10	
1927	6,409.02	1,305.00	625.00	
1928	13,261.15	510.00	481.00	4,500.00
1929	3,264.86	345.10	175.00	
1930	4,451.41	402.00	———	
1931	15,581.30	402.00	———	14,340.00
1932	2,883.42	290.50	———	1,000.00
1933	3,530.24	425.00	———	
1934	2,667.60	280.00	———	
1935	2,390.80	195.00	———	
1936	3,168.91	465.50	———	
1937	2,411.43	240.50	———	
1938	1,309.74	62.00	———	
1939	3.444.03	286.73	124.75	
1940	3,066.95	164.04	58.97	
1941	4,027.11	560.81	117.10	
1942	4,889.34	566.77	152.32	
1943	8,380.33	1,018.37	316.16	
1944	10,673.38	1,460.48	378.76	
1945	11,060.70	1,219.42	449.01	
1946	15,016.74	1,343.07	276.28	
1947	12,204.65	1,264.31	431.79	
1948	13,764.87	1,398.37	565.95	
1949	10,155.48	1,149.71	205.00	
1950	9,984.21	1,171.31	440.63	
1951	12,050.32	1,187.84	200.84	
1952	21,687.09	1,440.82	329.77	
1953	46,199.48	3,013.77	822.91	15,000.00

APPENDIX II

Vital Statistics

	Confirmation	Families	Souls	Deaths	Marriages	Baptisms
1912	28	8	5			108
1913	38	4	2			
1914	33	0	7			
1915	32	2	2			155
1916	30	11	7			
1917	38	6	7			
1918	38	5	5			
1919	29	9	1			84
1920	42	7	2			
1921	35	2	2			
1922	35	3	7			145
1923	30	5	7			
1924	32	5	5			
1925	27	5	4			
1926	29	5	4	133	806	
1927	20	8	5	134	831	
1928	25	13	2	138	825	
1929	21	6	3	123	737	
1930	18	4	4			
1931	21	4	4	132	766	
1932	21	11	5			104
1933	20	8	1			
1934	20	5	2	135	776	18
1935	15	5	8	143	798	
1936	22	5	5	149	807	
1937	15	4	5	154	832	
1938	16	7	6			36
1939	22	5	3	160	820	
1940	17	4	7	148	794	
1941	8	4	5	144	791	51
1942	17	6	8	138	773	
1943	16	1	6	135	732	
1944	15	9	9	143	736	49
1945	15	4	3	139	698	
1946	24	14	9	152	737	
1947	26	7	7	156	746	
1948	16	5	6	156	723	42
1949	24	3	3	154	723	
1950	18	4	3			47
1951	20	7	4	133	592	
1952	18	11	5	138	575	
1953	25	3	3	135	580	42
TOTAL	1,011	244	198			881

APPENDIX III

Odessa Village School Attendance

Year	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
1920	2				
1921	7	1			
1922	8	3	2		
1923	12	2	4		
1942	17	3	2	1	
1925	10	5	2	3	
1926	11	7	5	2	
1927	12	7	1	1	
1928	12	2	4	1	
1929	16	8	2	2	
1930	4	9	7	2	
1931	9	3	5	4	
1932	7	6	3	3	
1933	18	6	7	3	
1934	17	7	2	5	
1935	8	9	8	3	
1936	8	8	4	6	
1937	11	5	3	5	
1938	9	7	4	6	
1939	9	4	8	5	
1940	8	9	4	5	
1941	3	9	7	3	6
1942	7	4	8	8	5
1943	4	6	4	8	4
1944	7	3	5	4	5
1945	3	7	4	4	2
1946	4	3	4	5	2
1947	7	7	2	7	4
1948	9	7	7	3	3
1949	11	14	6	6	1
1950	3	8	13	7	4
1951	5	5	6	5	5
1952	4	7	5	4	5
1953	9	3	5	4	3
1954	11	8	2	2	2
TOTAL	302	201	155	127	51

Graduates from Odessa Schools (Where known):

Priests	4
Deacons	2
Sisters	9
Nurses	6
Student Nurses	3
University Degrees	12
Teachers	23

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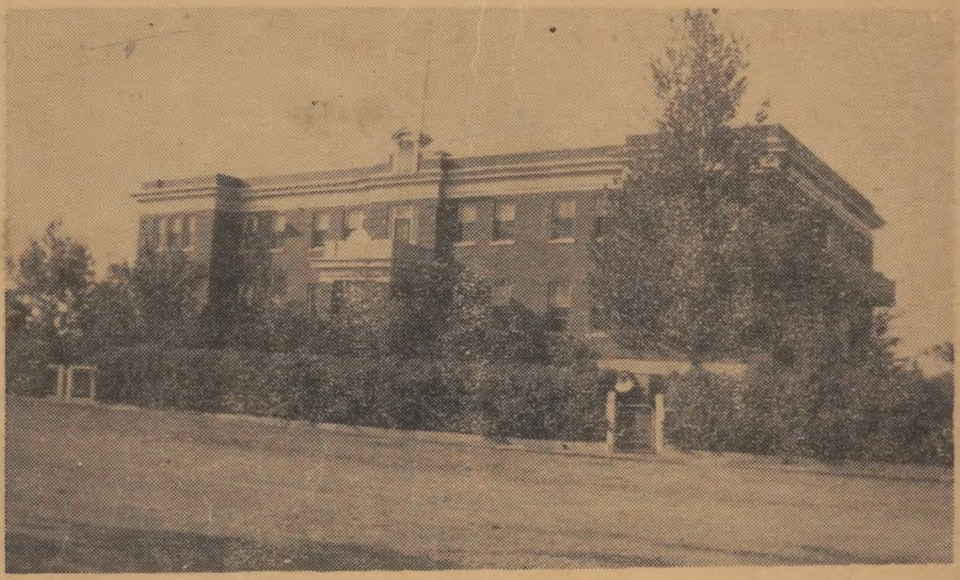

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For Information, write to:

Reverend Mother Superior,
Holy Family Convent, Vibank, Saskatchewan.